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SUPER PLAY

ISSUE 45

JULY 1996

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SUPER PLAY

JULY ISSUE 45

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THE SUPER PLAY EDITORIAL

from the BIG CHAIR

Our full contents listing starts just over the page

We're not going to beat about the bush here, but this issue of *Super Play* is absolutely crammed to the eyeballs with exclusive news, previews and original features.

Next month we actually get to play on a real-live Nintendo 64, so we'll be able to bring you the first qualified opinions on the machine then... But to get you through these next jittery couple of weeks, we've got more than a few tempters for what's in store. Just turn to our packed news section to get a glimpse of all-new shots of *Mission: Impossible*, *Robotech*, and *Shadows of the Empire*, to name but a few.

The SNES isn't missing out on the action either as you'll have gathered by our stunning cover, as the arcade hit *Street Fighter Alpha* is on its way to our much-loved 16-bit, And... rumour has it, more biggies are on the way!

Elsewhere we've got what must be the most comprehensive guide to SNES role-playing. Everything you've ever wanted to know about the genre is contained within. And even if you're not charmed by the whimsical ways of hit-points and magic, we suspect you may fall under the spell by the time you've read this!

In our ever-helpful way we've even included a guide to using adaptors so you can make the most of the excellent import releases that have never made it to the UK. Plus we've got our top tips for the best High Street SNES bargains. And, well, loads more. Turn the page and see...

Alison Harper, Editor

INDEPENDENT SNES AND NINTENDO 64 MAGAZINE

SUPER PLAY

CON

REGULARS

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Part two of the biggest, most comprehensive guide around...

BREAK THE CODE

Open up a whole world of new games! All you need is the right adaptor...

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The best 2D beat-'em-up in the world is destined for your SNES...

SUPER STREET FIGHTER alpha

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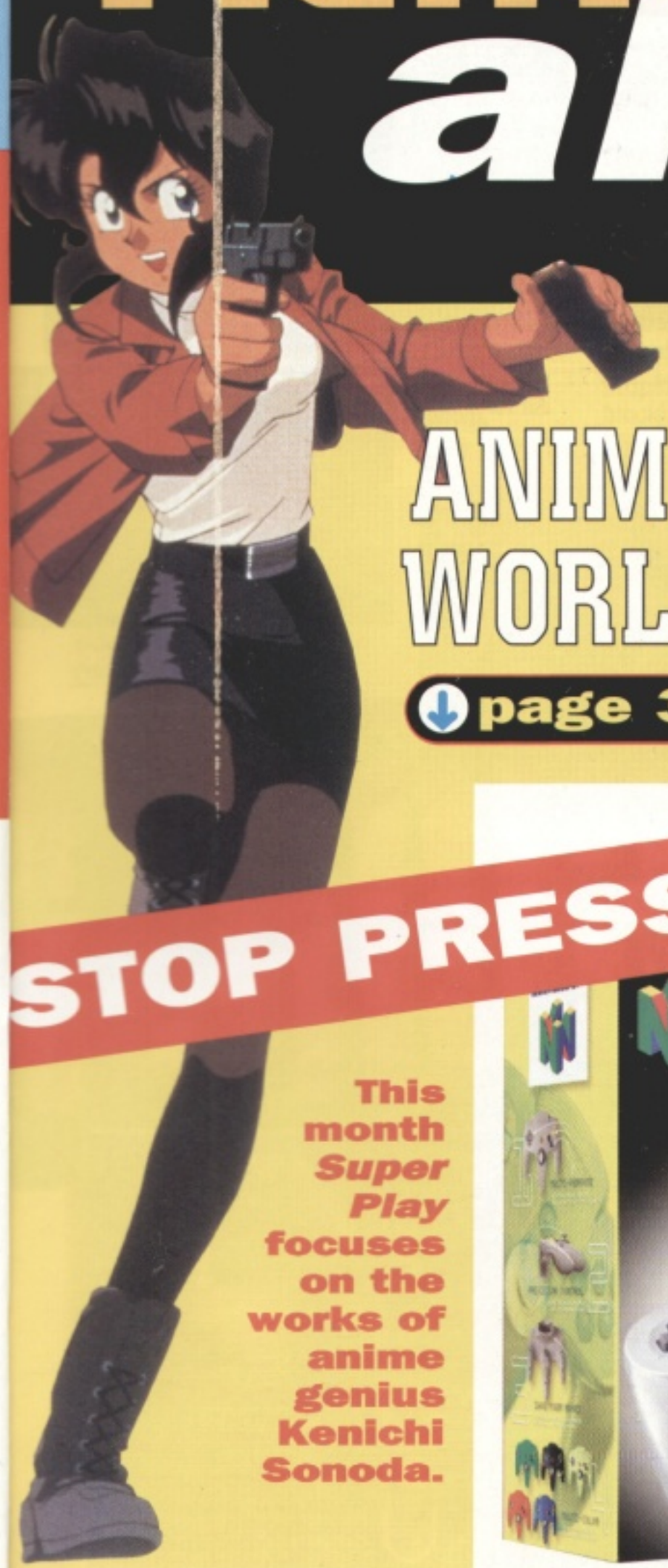


ANIME WORLD

page 34

This month *Super Play* focuses on the works of anime genius Kenichi Sonoda.

RUMOUR MILL

Super Play susses out the latest N64 gossip.

page 36

STOP PRESS STOP PRESS STOP

Well, it was at the *very* last minute and we just couldn't resist showing you what the American N64 packaging is supposed to look like. Trivial? Maybe. Although it does show that the blessed thing is actually almost here! But... 'The Fun Machine'?!?

SUPER

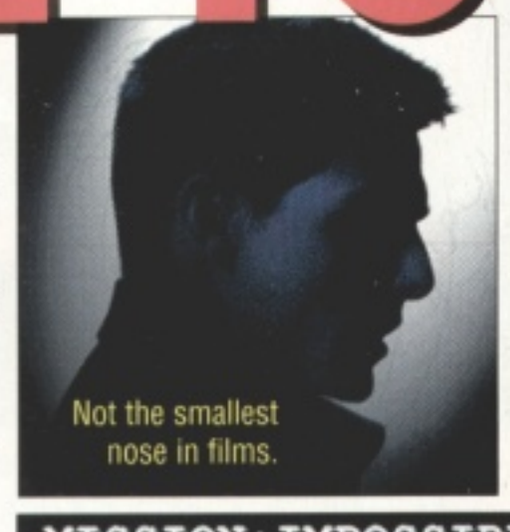
YOUR MISSION, YOU DECIDE TO'

Following on from Acclaim's lead last month with Turok: Dinosaur Hunter, Ocean have come out of the woodwork prior to E3 with their first N64 title, Mission: Impossible.

Even though our American correspondent managed to get hold of these screenshots of Ocean's eagerly awaited *Mission: Impossible*, very little is known about the game at the time of going to press. Still, here's what we *do* know and at least we've scooped the competition yet again...

Mission: Impossible is a spy simulation licence of the upcoming *Mission: Impossible* movie and will be released in the US in time for the N64's launch, with a PC release scheduled for the following month.

The game will be viewed from varying perspectives, thanks largely to the innovative floating camera effect. This will allow 360 degree character mobility and will show off stunningly detailed 3D backgrounds that simply aren't achievable on any other home system. As for



Not the smallest nose in films.

Exploring is viewed from a first-person perspective.

NEWS

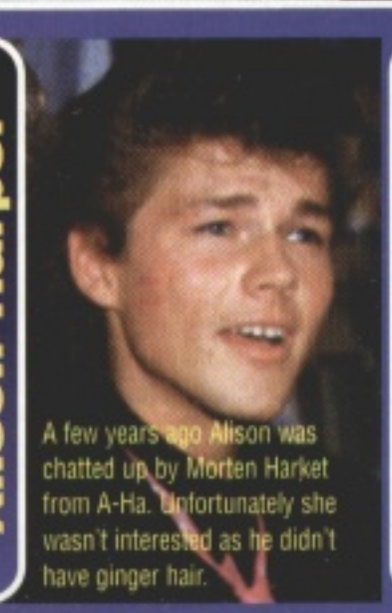
Pre-renderage for all the family.

MISSION: I

PROFILES

This month, for your pleasure, the *Super Play* team will display the subject of their favourite claims to fame...

Alison Harper

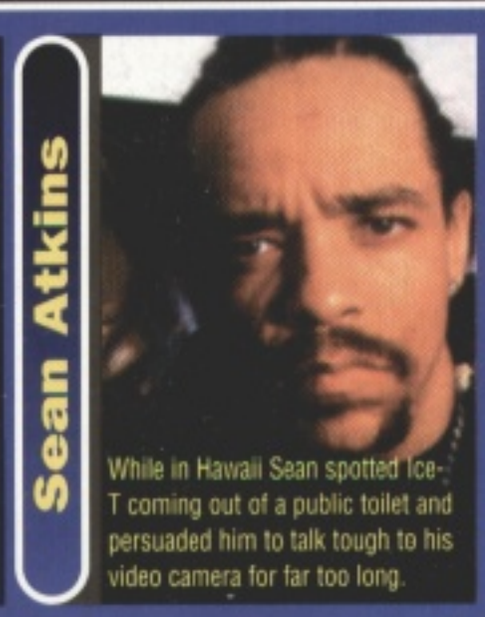


A few years ago Alison was chatted up by Morten Harket from A-Ha. Unfortunately she wasn't interested as he didn't have ginger hair.

Ollie Alderton

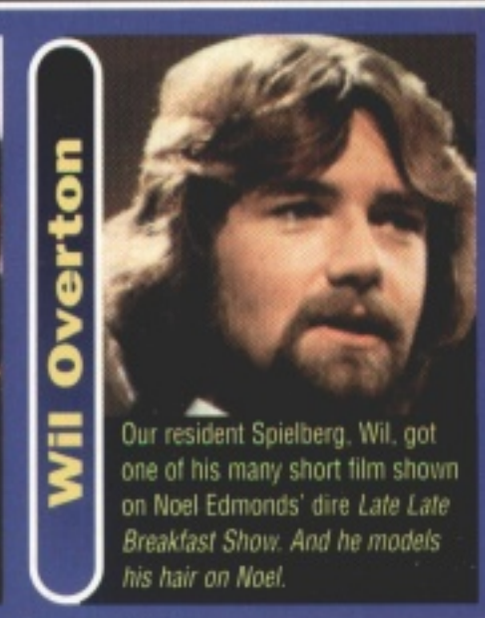
Ollie confronted Billie after a gig and thrust a record sleeve out of his pants for a signature. Billy yelped, "I wondered what you were going to pull out there."

Sean Atkins



While in Hawaii Sean spotted Ice-T coming out of a public toilet and persuaded him to talk tough to his video camera for far too long.

Wil Overton

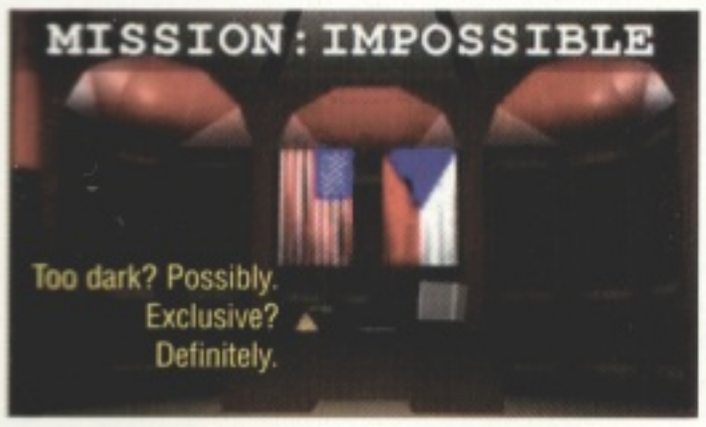


Our resident Spielberg, Wil, got one of his many short film shown on Noel Edmonds' dire *Late Late Breakfast Show. And he models his hair on Noel.*

EXPRESS

NEWS NETWORK NINTENDO 64 NEWS NETWORK NINTENDO 64

..., JIM, SHOULD ...TAKE IT...



gameplay, we know that the cart combines puzzle-solving with arcade elements, but we'll leave the rest to Howard Lincoln, "*Mission: Impossible* will deliver the type of breakthrough gameplay available only on Nintendo 64. Ocean's renowned video game development talent and the strength of such an exciting Paramount property is the absolute right mix to create a blockbuster title for our new 64-bit system. We want players to experience the best."

Fair enough, Howie.

We'll have an in-depth and exclusive preview of *Mission: Impossible* in our massive E3 report next issue. This news story will self-destruct in five seconds...

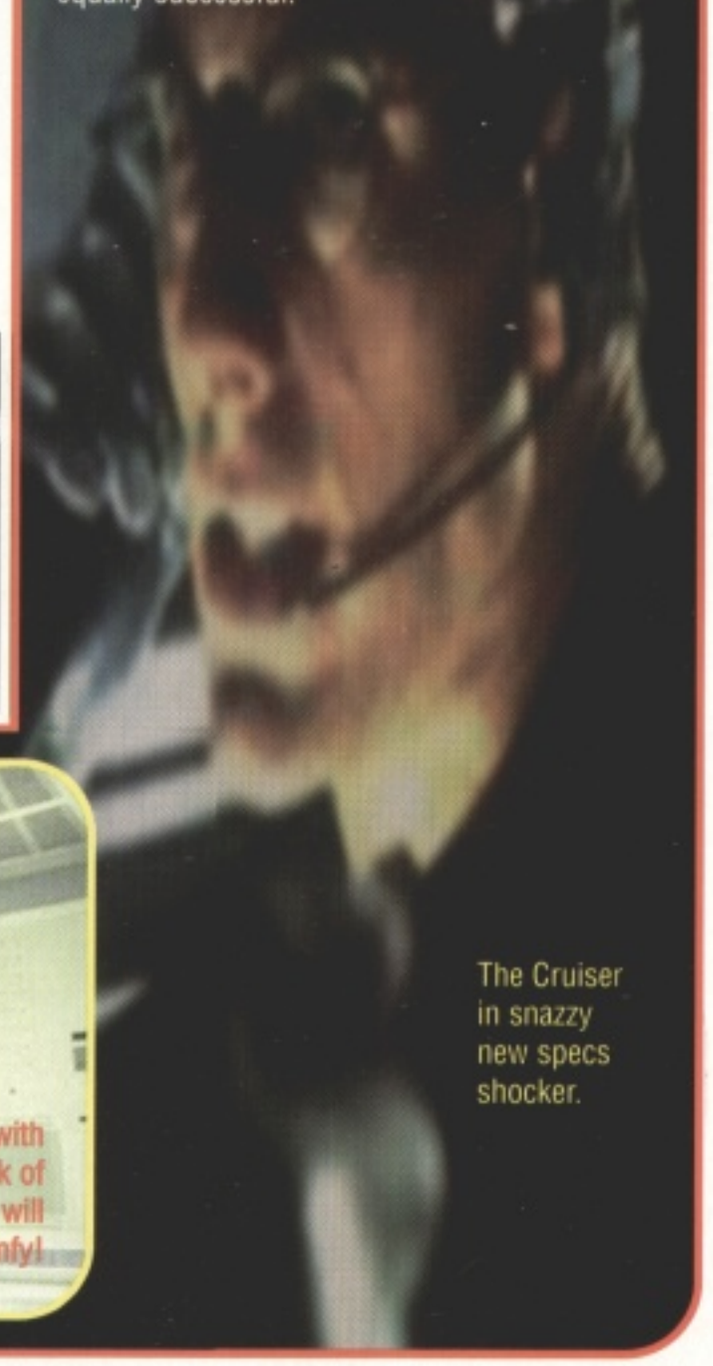
A wireframe development pic of the screen shot above.

MISSION: IMPOSSIBLE THE MOVIE

Tom Cruise not only stars in, but co-produces the big screen version of *Mission: Impossible* this summer.

Under the helm of Brian De Palma (*Scarface, The Untouchables*), *Mission: Impossible* will be loosely based on the 60s TV series of the same name. In fact, the only similarity between the original series and the film adaptation – besides the theme tune – is the presence of Jim Phelps (the silver-haired boss originally played by Peter Graves), who, this time around, will be portrayed by Oscar winner John Voight.

Mission: Impossible will receive a nationwide UK release in June, and looks destined to become one of the biggest-grossing films of the year. Here's hoping that the game is equally successful.



The Cruiser in snazzy new specs shocker.

ROBOTECH:

N NEWS

Battle Of The Planets, anyone? Fancy a bit of transmutage? Where's Keyop?

Gametek were one of the first third party developers to sign up as part of Nintendo's Dream Team way back in '94 and it's taken until now for the fruits of their labour to surface – *Robotech: Crystal Dreams*. The game will be unveiled at next month's E3 show in LA, but, as always, *Super Play* managed to get hold of a couple of exclusive advance screen shots.

Game details are still a closely guarded secret, but here's what is certain at time of going to press: *Crystal Dreams* will be the first part in a saga (exclusive to the N64) set in the Robotech universe, the game is largely a strategic shoot-'em-up, old favourites such as Max Sterling and Rick Hunter will be present to help you on your quest, for the most part battling against various Zenraedi ships. You take control of a Veritech fighter which will, when selected, boast different abilities in Fighter, Battloid and Guardian modes.

Just from the look of

This is all in-game action!

The big question mark hangs over whether the player has any control over the ship.

That'll be a Japanese robot then.

Read it and weep PlayStation owners.

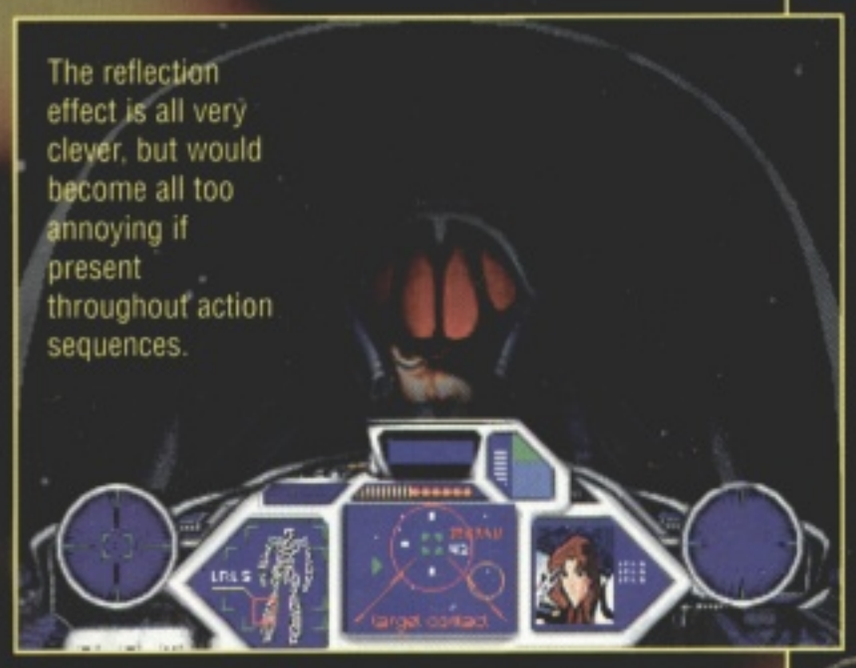
Rave Racer will eclipse any previous console driving sim and, according to our source in Japan, will be arcade perfect. If this is the case you can expect one brilliantly designed city circuit together with two stunning mountain tracks. All the features that made the *Ridge Racer*

Namco are on the verge of confirming *Rave Racer 64* as their first N64 title, a game certain to eclipse *Cruis'n USA/The World* as the N64's Killer App driving sim, we can reveal.

Will we finally see a true arcade-perfect racer?

RAVE RAC

CRYSTAL DREAMS



The reflection effect is all very clever, but would become all too annoying if present throughout action sequences.

The cockpit is only temporary. Gametek have yet to design the finished in-ship environment.

these shots it's apparent that Gametek have answered those critics who questioned whether they were qualified to enter Nintendo's prestigious Dream Team.

One key element that could make or break *Robotech* in sales terms is whether the player is merely shunted along a given route or free to explore the environment (D-pad ship control, analogue weapon control anyone?). Time will tell.

Although we shouldn't be pedantic after only having seen a handful of in-game shots, it is apparent that the explosions shown are identical in many of the shots. A tad worrying, but not the end of the world. We'll have a full preview of *Robotech: Crystal Dreams* (poor title by the way) next month.

Can the N64 finally solve the problem of scenery update?

These screenshots are from the coin-op version.

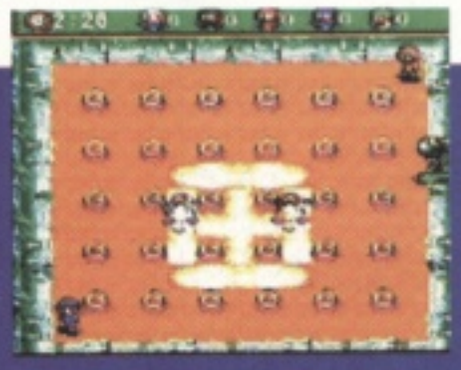
coin-op so much fun have been mercilessly ripped off (tunnels a-plenty, a series of jumps, counter-steering and power-slides) and graphically you can expect the most realistic racer ever.

PlayStation owners will be shocked that this *Ridge-*beater won't be appearing on their ordinarily Namco-friendly machine, so pause for a moment, take a deep breath and yell "LOSERS!"

More on this startlingly good racer when actual screenshots appear.

ER 64

SUPER BOMBERMAN 4



That'll be an explosion then. Not like the previous three at all.

Hello lovely ladies, any idea what we can do with these bombs?

The end of level sequences haven't changed much then.

Hmm, chicks and bombs. Must take picture for later.

Okay, here's the bad news: we had expected to give you a world exclusive review of the fourth instalment of the best multi-player game ever, but the game has slipped slightly in Japan so wasn't available at time of going to press. Right, here's some more bad news: we haven't got a clue what the differences are yet – a rare thing in the world of *Super Play*, but sadly true.

Now, what would you do if you had a load of screenshots and videotapes of the Japanese commercials of *Super Bomberman 4*? Would you hold back on printing anything until next month because of a lack of information, or would you print the shots and come clean to your understanding readers? That's what we thought, erm, sorry...

Check out next month's ish for an explanation.

Why you little! We'll teach you and yer camera antics a lesson.

More Bomberman shots anyone?

He's at it again! Drop your bomb. We'll get that dirty birdy.

Erm, do you think we should stick around or run off sharpish?

Let get all animated instead. Not much fun being a cartoon, is it?

The two commercials currently airing in Japan for *Super Bomberman 4* are mad in the head. That's all that can be said about them, oh, apart from the following throwaway caption antics...

THEY'RE ALL MAD OVER THERE

They like both our bombs.
We take our bombs to bed!
The earth moves for everyone involved.
Look at us! We're mad in the head!
Still, we've got a couple of top birds.
And they're rock-hard.

FIRST N64 ACCESSORIES REVEALED

First out of the closet with plans to release a range of third party accessories for the N64 are InterAct Accessories (most famous for their Game Shark add-on – a US variation on our very own Action Replay code-breaking system).

InterAct have announced that they are currently developing an N64 Game Shark, an enhanced memory card, a cleaning kit, a controller extension cable, an RF switch adaptor, a flight stick, a steering wheel, a beat-'em-up controller and a "top secret device that tips its hat to one of Nintendo's most successful products."

The machine's not even out yet, but already a range of crafty devices are being worked upon.

NO MORE DELAYS!

Here it is! The confirmation we've all been waiting for! The N64 will definitely be released in Japan on June 23rd. This ad appeared in the weekly Japanese games mag, *Famicom Tsushin*, earlier this month and proves to the world that Nintendo are finally on schedule.

As previously announced, the launch games will be *Super Mario 64*, *Pilotwings 64* and *Habu Nanakano No Saikyo Habu Shogi*. Get saving, the import versions will be available in the UK from July 1st.

It's as official as can be. June 23rd is the date to remember…

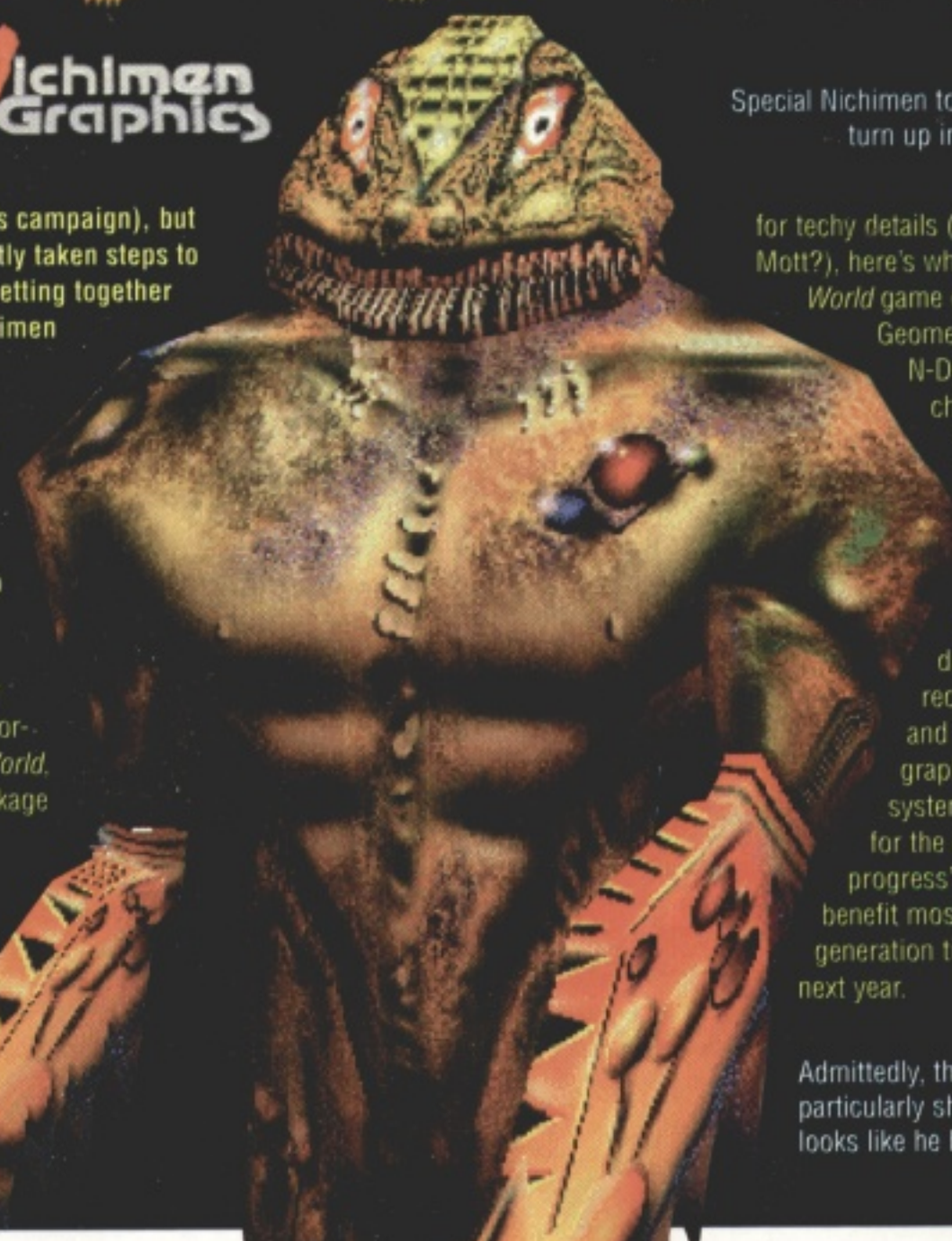
SUPER MARIO 64 TOOLS AVAILABLE TO THIRD PARTY DEVELOPERS

Much has been made of how long software on the N64 is taking to complete (witness Sega's recent 'Who in their right minds would wait over two years for a plumber?' press campaign), but Nintendo have recently taken steps to speed things up by getting together with SGI gurus, Nichimen Graphics.

Nichimen Graphics

The Nichimen Graphics corporation of Japan have already sent out three engineers to Nintendo HQ in Kyoto to evaluate the situation before showering third party developers with a tailor-made version of *N-World*, the graphic tools package used by Nintendo to develop *Super Mario 64*.

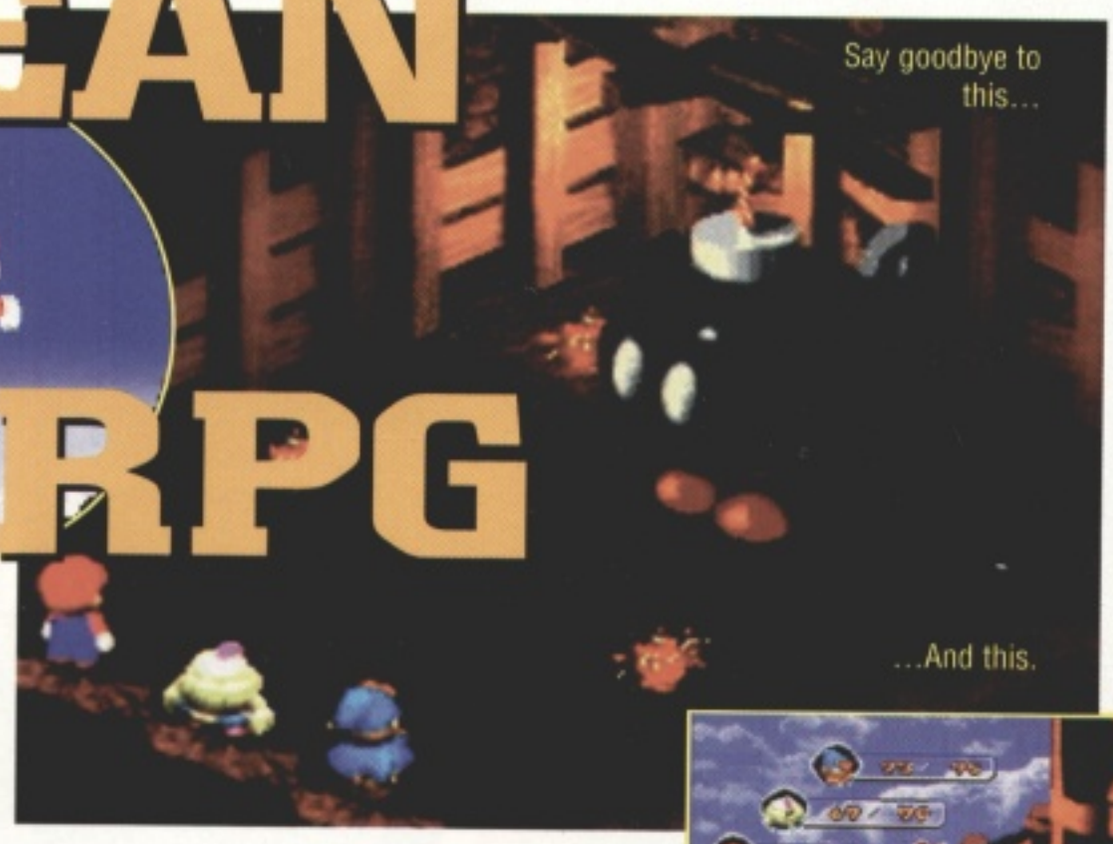
For those of you with a passion for techy details (are you reading, Tony Mott?), here's what's included in the *N-World* game development kit: N-Geometry (a 3D modeller), N-Dynamics (an animation choreographer and skeleton animation system), N-Render (erm, a rendering package), Action Editor (which converts animated data into a format recognised by the N64) and N-Paint (a 2D graphics system). The system will arrive too late for the current crop of 'in progress' titles, but should benefit most of the second generation titles in the middle of next year.



Special Nichimen tools that aren't likely to turn up in your Grandad's shed.

Admittedly, that's a nice render, but a particularly shoddy creation. He looks like he belongs on Rainbow.

EUROPEAN NO TO MARIO RPG



THE games have recently announced that *Super Mario RPG* will definitely not be receiving a release in the European market. This comes as a blow to SNES gamers who have remained faithful to the brand even in the wake of the success of 32-bit consoles and a general decline in the 16-bit market as a whole.

Dick Francis, THE Games Managing Director said, "Sadly, we will not have the enjoyment of marketing, selling and distributing the great Super NES game *Super Mario RPG* in the UK and Ireland. Unfortunately, events beyond our control mean that the game will not be released on the PAL format, ensuring no release across all European markets."

The whole decision smells strongly of repercussions from the recent Square/Nintendo barny which resulted in those lucky PlayStation owners salivating over the prospect of an exclusive *Final Fantasy VII*. We'll uncover the real story behind this decision NEXT MONTH.

BLABBERMOUTH

with Kris and Tel

Terence, are you there? I'm so drained from the current gaming gossip famine that I've taken to hammering my feet. This pre-E3 month is always the worst. Feed me with information, foil face!

Calm down, Kris, for rust's sake. Yes, I do happen to be in possession of a few snippets of hot gaming news, but if you're going to be rude...

... Sorry, Tel boy, I recently had a Slick 50 enema and am not quite feeling myself yet. Do tell all.

Right you are, chief... well, for starters, I've heard that the first soccer game for the Nintendo 64 will be *Dynamite Soccer* from Imagineer, of all people.

That's surprising. I wasn't aware that they had any involvement with the N64.

Neither did the rest of the world, Kris. The story slipped out in a certain weekly Japanese gaming journal. Should be ready in time for the Shoshinkai show in November by all accounts. What've you heard in the world of Nintendo?

Not too much, really. One reliable source of mine insists that *Doom 64* is so impressive that it's going to steal E3 next month. The way he tells it, the rendered monsters and silky smooth environment makes id's upcoming *Quake* look a tad dated already.

Have you heard about the recently departed Tony Mott and his new fame seeking exploits, Kris?

Haven't heard a sausage. What's the filthy Mottster up to this time? He hasn't gone and chained himself naked to a national landmark again, has he?

No, nothing that's likely to get quite that much publicity. He's got himself a monthly column on Teletext/Channel 4's Digitizer, along with a selection of other hand-picked showbiz personalities. You really ought to check it out, he appears to have finally developed a sense of humour – bless him and his game spaz ways.

I really miss Tony.

I really miss Tony too.

E3 PREVIEW

Next month sees the arrival of the most eagerly awaited videogames exhibition in history, the Electronics Entertainment Expo '96 (E3). Don't go getting too excited, it's in Los Angeles, so unless you're one of the lucky ones with the means of making it out there, you're just going to have to rely on *Super Play* to bring you all the news next ish. Anyway, until then, why not tuck in to this speculative show preview?

Forget other systems, this is going to be the Nintendo 64 show. E3 will mark the first public viewing for the N64 since last November and will also mark the machine's North American debut. So, what can we expect? Well, it's like this...

Firstly, Nintendo themselves have still got a few SNES surprises up their sleeves. From what we've been hearing they will be unveiling a *Donkey Kong 3*, *Killer Instinct 2* and a winter sports title which will utilize the FX chip (*FX Skiing* according to our fella in the US).

Okay, so... on to the Nintendo 64. Between eight and ten titles will be displayed in playable form together with loads on video (in a Shoshinkai sort of way). Right, we're going out on a limb here so forgive us next month when our lowdown on all the games at the show contradicts everything you are about to read: The playable titles will be *Super Mario 64*, *Pilotwings 64*, *Shadows Of The Empire*, *Goldeneye*, *Doom 64*, *Blastdozer*, *Body Harvest*, *Super Mario Kart 64* and *Kirby Bowl*. We'll see.

Other Nintendo announcements will include a new dirt-cheap Game Boy and confirmation or postponement of the North American N64 release date. To read the most comprehensive show report in the world – tune in this time next month. Right that's it, we're all off to the US. See ya.

SUPER PLAY'S A SELL-OUT!

We've had quite a few calls over the last few weeks from readers dismayed that they can no longer find copies of *Super Play* on sale in their local newsie.

Please stop haranguing us, it's not our problem if your newsie is too dumb to stock our wonderful mag. There are, we feel we should point out, two sneaky, but sure-fire, ways around this problem. The first solution is to use this natty cut-out coupon and hand it over to your newsagent to make sure he gets a copy of the mag in his shop for you, or you could go one better and ask him to have it delivered. Your second option is to turn to page 75 and get a subscription. Do it now!

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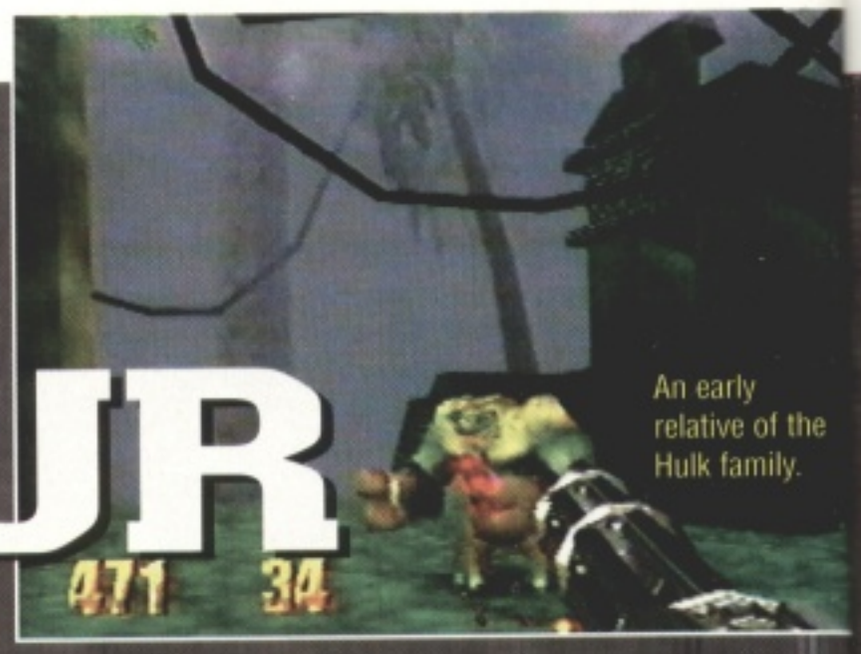
TUROK: DINOSAUR HUNTER ALL NEW SHOTS! AGAIN!



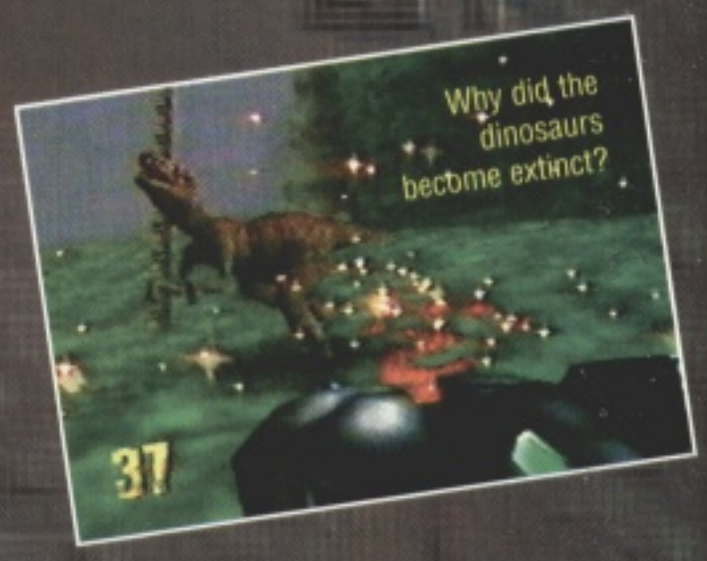
An early relative of the Hulk family.

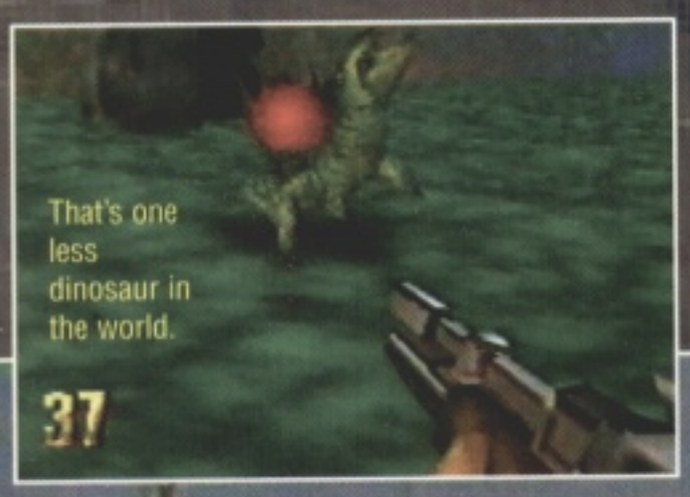
That's what a dinosaur looks like when he's been blasted to pieces.

As exclusively revealed in last month's *Super Play*, Acclaim's *Turok: Dinosaur Hunter* is coming along in leaps and bounds. In fact it seems to have jumped from 40% complete to 65% in just four weeks!

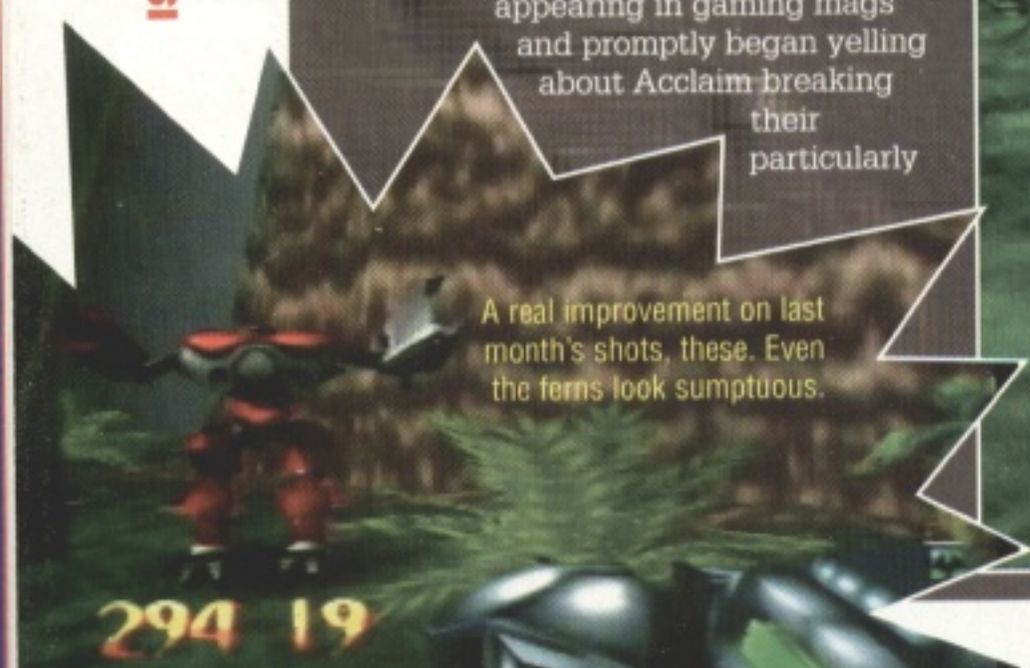
The reason for a second release of shots by Acclaim lies in the wrist-slapping session that Nintendo gave them after the world's press was less than enthusiastic about last month's initial batch. The story goes that Acclaim were less than amused by Nintendo's lack of response when asked whether shots could be released and so decided to supply a rough 'work in progress' videotape to anyone that requested it. Nintendo Of America hit the roof when the fuzzy, detail-free pics started appearing in gaming mags and promptly began yelling about Acclaim breaking their particularly stringent non-disclosure agreement. However, these new shots are sure to calm the folk at Ninty, and, apparently, the two companies have since had a massive family hug and dished out compliments on each others' dress sense. Ahh, how sweet.

Anyway, until our exclusive *Turok* preview next month, enjoy these all-new and greatly improved screenshots.





From the looks of it, there's masses of blood and gore involved when you're a dinosaur hunter.



A real improvement on last month's shots, these. Even the ferns look sumptuous.

Stalking about *Doom* style.

Hulk-thing gets it in the neck.

One thing you won't go short on in this is monsters. Monsters galore.

Watch out little raptor – that gun is for you.

Oh. Too late.

Fortunately, you're armed with a very big gun.

POCKET GAME BOY ANNOUNCED

Nintendo of Japan recently announced launch plans for an all-new, scaled down version of the Game Boy to be released on July 21st.

The new handheld – not to be confused with the 32-bit Project Atlantis – will improve on the traditional mono display by utilising super-twisted-nematic liquid crystal display technology. This should lead to a crystal clear screen boasting a higher level of contrast and none of that aggravating motion-blur which cropped up on the previous version.

The Pocket Game Boy will be around half the size of the current version and will retail for around 6,800 yen in Japan – that's around £6 cheaper than the original. Expect an announcement on US and European release dates at E3. We'll have a full report next issue.

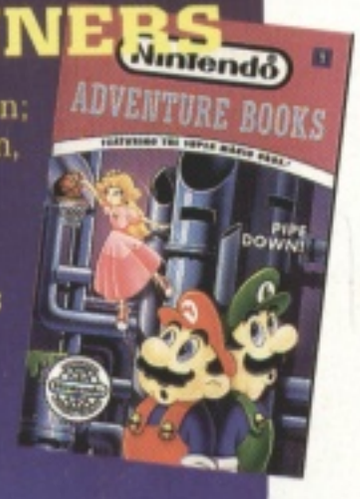
COMPETITION WINNERS

OCEAN/WOOLWORTHS PRIZE DRAW

Winner: Paul Staples, Guernsey; 15 runners-up: Steve Jedrek, Mitcham; Andrew Groves, Ashington, Northumberland; Marcus Biggs, Southampton; Gregory Alan Lamb, Basildon; Matthew Lee, Ashburton; Paul Morris, Treflach; Wyn Gravelle, Carmarthen; Lee Hodkinson, South Woodford; Alex Lymbouris, Farnham; Graham Boorman, Tonbridge; John Russell, Prestwick; Elliot Jefferson, Hemel Hempstead; Josh Abbott, Langdon Hills; Michelle Pugh, London; D Williams, Formby.

MARIO BOOKS WINNERS

Hayley Hung, Leamington Spa; C. Herbaut, London; Christopher Parkinson, Northallerton; Chris Easton, Perth; David Lawrence, Letchworth; Tim Easun, Ashford; James Gough, Leicester; James Draper, Adlington; Anita Lam, Bricketwood; Keith Danasarn, Battersea; Romanos Panagiotis, Athens



VIDEO COMP

James Gough, Leicester; David Lawrence, Letchworth

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PGA tour Golf 96!

SET THE RECORD STRAIGHT, ENTER...

THE SUPER PLAY READERS TOP100

"Dear *Super Play*, I **felt I must write to inform you of my absolute disgust and outrage at the fact that you saw fit to place *The Legend of Zelda* above *Cool Spot* in your recent Top 100 feature. I feel this to be an abhorrent, loathsome expression of taste in an otherwise excellent magazine... Disgusted of Dorchester." Is he right? Or... is he wrong? We're asking you to decide.**

A couple of issues back (*SP42*, to be precise) you may remember we ran the Super Play Top 100. Well, such is the controversy that this has sparked off that we've decided to let you have your say in the matter.

This is your chance to tell us the way you see it – anonymously, if you wish, but we'd advise against it, cos then we've no way of sending you a rather top prize. Yes, taking part in the *Super Play* Readers' Top 100 earns you the right to enter the draw for the first prize of a radio-controlled Bandit car, plus five runner-up prizes of a copy of *PGA Tour Golf 96*, kindly donated by T•HQ.

In two issues' time we'll be running the results of your choices in the mag. It'll be interesting to see how your top 100 compares with our own much pondered-over version!

Just fill in your top 10 SNES games on this page. Complete all the other relevant boxes and send the whole thing in an envelope to: *Super Play* Reader Top 100, *Super Play*, Future Publishing, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath BA1 2BW.

Closing date for entries: Friday 21st June

My top 10 bestest SNES games ever are:

1. .....
2. .....
3. .....
4. .....
5. .....
6. .....
7. .....
8. .....
9. .....
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Name: .....

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FANTA

Got mixed feelings about always playing the goodie? The latest release from Enix gives you a choice... but would the local Vicar approve?

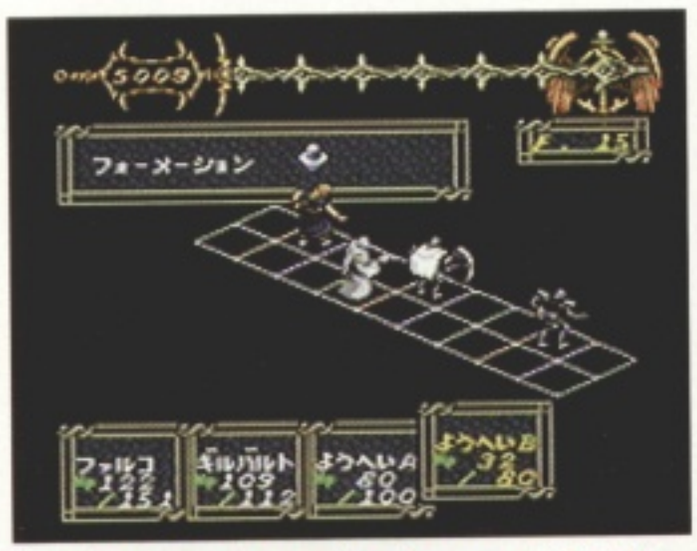
Dark Half

Enix/Westone/T's Music • 24Mbit • 31 May (Japan)

Everyone knows (or at least those who've bashed away at *Ogre Battle*) that playing the bad guy is often a lot more fun than those whiter than white hero types who are usually foistered upon RPG players. Hoorah then for Enix's latest, *Dark Half*, which not only gives you a hero, but also lets you play as the top badmeister himself – Satan.

The game's scenario may last only a week, but, as you're playing as two characters, you get to play each day twice following the plot from the view of each protagonist. As bad guy incarnate – Satan, you've been sealed away for one thousand years in the Eye Of Satan by the mighty knight Roda, before being accidently released by the game's hero Falco. The Lord of Darkness is rightly miffed at being put away for so long, and so, he kills Falco and goes off in a mighty huff looking for Roda and the seven holy knights. Fortunately, Falco is revived by a mysterious voice. So begins your quest to put Satan back where he came from.

Enix have tried to make both Satan and Falco's statistics work in different ways, to make playing as each a unique experience. Both have an energy meter, called Soul Power, which decreases as you wander around the landscape, and, as the game is over when it's empty, both characters have to constantly replenish their supply. For Satan, this means killing lots of people so he can then drain their Soul Power, but Falco has a choice... He can either collect



Position your party members (or servants if you're Satan) to form the best offensive.

something called Fatia which, when given to a character called Kaifu-shi, can be made into Soul Power or he can pray for Satan's slain victims. If any of their souls make it to heaven, Falco receives the Light Of Hope. The trade-off is that if the dead had no hope in their life, then as likely as not they'd become Zombies and attack you.

Even the way the character's experience increases is different for Satan and Falco.

Day 4 and George Clooney still can't get out of that *ER* habit of not looking anyone in the eye.

Using magic saps your Soul Power. Major bummer.

Satan's pets include dragons, hellhounds and bizarre replicas of Linda Blair.

"That's MR High Priest Of Chaos to you, m'lad!"

Super Mario RPG style battles but without any of the fluffy bits.

SY QUEST

Cindy's new coat (a present from David) causes a gut reaction from Ian.

Satan has no experience points as such, but his hit points (HP) increase with every battle. His level is measured by how powerful his servants are (and you can have up to four to fight for you). Falco is slightly more traditional in that he has two level-up systems. A Chaos orb that increases HP and a Magic Orb that, not surprisingly, ups your

Satan gets his manservants to do the dirty work. Much like *Super Play*'s bosses.

magic capability. As there's no money in *Dark Half*'s world (what, no gold pieces?!!) Falco needs the mysterious Fatia to craft any weapons from.

With a *Mario RPG* style perspective and a genuinely new scenario, *Dark Half* is yet another 16bit role playing game with more innovation than the next generation systems can afford between them.

"I say, old chaps, make us one of those sword thingys out of this here Fatia stuff."

Watch out, Satan, a dodgy looking Tom Cruise is out to get you.

Ye Olde Tavern of Gossip

Having purchased some shiny new armour and a healthy amount of hit point reviving herbs, make your way over to the local tavern where there's always a bed available and a jar of Old Demonists' Paladin Peculiar. Don't worry if you miss a juicy piece of RPG news, just ask again, folk rarely say something different in these parts.

Following last month's news on Nintendo's recruitment drive, it would appear that the reason for the talent search is a new project for the N64, namely none other than *Super Mario RPG 2*. This time, of course, without the help of a certain four-sided 64 deserter. Don't expect to start hearing release dates for a good year or so, and whether Shigeru Miyamoto is again producing is yet unknown (but highly likely). Isometric landscapes with full 360° rotation, anyone?

We get shivers just imagining what *Super Mario World 2* on N64 could be like. Honest.

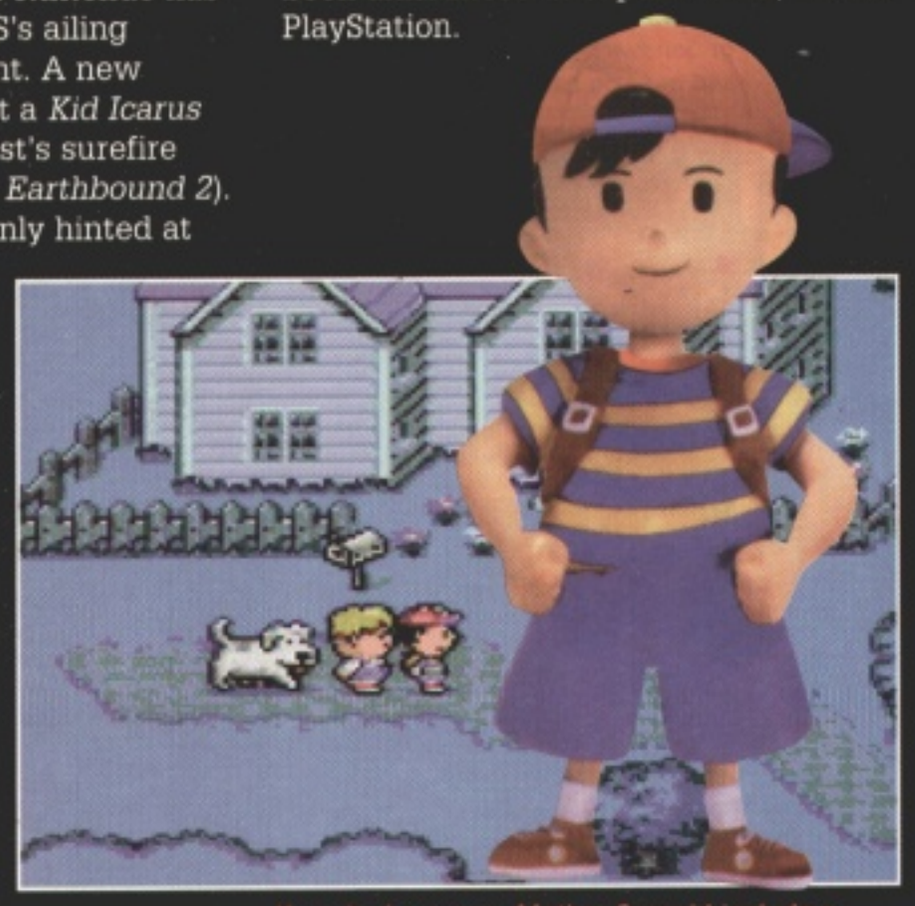
There are many rumours circulating about which blockbusters Nintendo has lined up to keep the SNES's ailing software situation buoyant. A new *Zelda*, maybe? How about a *Kid Icarus* action RPG? Fantasy Quest's surefire money is on *Mother 3* (or *Earthbound 2*). NCL in Japan have certainly hinted at such, and Shigesato Itoi's four kids against alien invaders in smalltown USA epic was left wide open at the end for more trouble in Onett.

Don't believe all those so-called N64 game lists in other mags that claim *Dragon Quest VII* is already a confirmed title. Neither Enix nor DQ author Yuji Horii have decided what sort of game they're going to produce for the Nintendo 64. Horii has gone on record saying that it could well be a *Dragon Quest* 'gaiden' (side story) game somewhat like the Torneco dungeon bashes on the Super Famicom. Does this mean that Enix too think that N64 carts are too small for a *Dragon Quest/Final Fantasy* sized 64bit adventure?

Despite appearing on press releases since Christmas, *Breath Of Fire 2*, the product of UK distributor Marubeni's deal with Capcom, has yet to reach

This'll be the last chance you'll get to play *Breath Of Fire* on the SNES. If it ever gets here, that is.

either these offices or UK dealers' shelves. Calls to the Marubeni office failed to bring forth any real information. Meanwhile *Breath Of Fire III* has already been announced in Japan... alas, for the PlayStation.



If we had our way *Mother 3* would include a special malt shop where you could mix your own milk shakes like a Double Chocolate Malted.

THE CHARTS

Compiled by: Chart-Track
© ELSPA

ChartTrack

For weekly UK SNES chart updates you can either tune in to Digitizer, Teletext page 470, Channel 4 or use your Dad's PC to read the Super Play page on the Internet at http://www.futurenet.co.uk

Oh, those charts are really changing month to month. Go and dig out last month's issue and spot the difference – it's simply staggering!

OFFICIAL UK SUPER NINTENDO CHART

1	DIDDY'S KONG QUEST	Nintendo	SP40 82%
2	KILLER INSTINCT	Nintendo	SP36 85%
3	YOSHI'S ISLAND	Nintendo	SP36 94%
4	FIFA SOCCER '96	Electronic Arts	SP37 84%
5	PGA TOUR GOLF '96	T•HQ	SP42 85%
6	SUPER METROID	Nintendo	SP25 91%
7	SUPER PUNCHOUT!	Nintendo	SP27 90%
8	SUPERSTAR SOCCER DELUXE	Konami	SP38 94%
9	PRIMAL RAGE	Time Warner Interactive	SP36 60%
10	THEME PARK	Ocean	SP36 92%

SUPER PLAY'S HOT LIST

Cor, with all the new SNES titles released this month we've been busier than ever – that was a joke.

ALISON

"*Magical Drop* is the game of the month for me and no mistake. Okay, so it's consumed nearly a week of my time, but I was helping with the review – honestly. If you can find it, I suggest you buy it immediately."

SEAN

"*Power Piggs* is such good value! Don't get me wrong, I don't mean in monetary terms, I mean in a laughs-per-level kind of way. It's so rubbish that it's borderline great. Still, at least it's new, I suppose."

OLLIE

"I've been playing Video Poker on my Mac all month. Sorry it isn't a SNES game, but it's so addictive and besides, I've got a joypad-blister on my thumb after playing *Olympic Summer Games* last month."

WIL

"Strangely enough, I've been bashing away on that old gem *Stunt Race FX* this month in an attempt to beat Sean's fastest time using the bike on Sunset Valley in Free Tracks mode. Can any of you beat 1.51.45?"

Not all videogames magazines are the same

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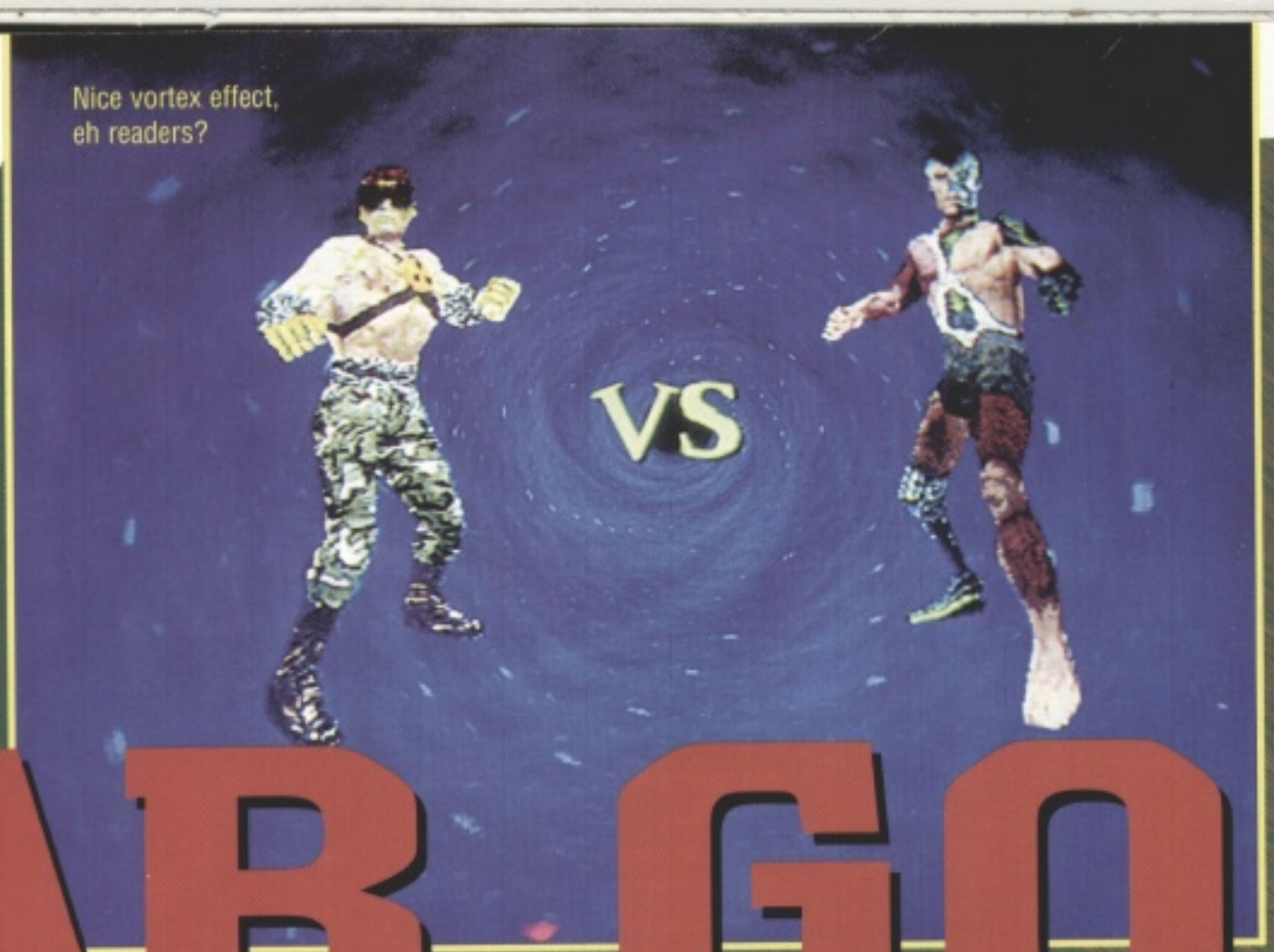
It's still in its infancy, but *War Gods* from Midway attempts to turn the beat-'em-up genre on its head with a revolutionary new 3D combat system...



Nice vortex effect, eh readers?

WAR GO

Above: Aha, that'll be the storyline then.

Top characters, and rather swanky costumes.

If you want to sample the explosive action of *War Gods*, get yourself down the arcade.

Warhead gives Cy-5 a rightful beating.

It may increasingly be the case that the racing game is the measure of a console's capabilities, but, alongside the struggle to create the ultimate driving game sits the battle of the beat-'em-ups. And, unless a machine has at least a handful of combat games to choose from, it's not going to capture the imaginations of many punters out there. This presents a bit of a problem for the Nintendo 64. The respective sagas of *Street Fighter* and *Mortal Kombat* which started further back than we can even remember are still going strong, and, with the advent of next generation consoles, games like *Tekken*, *Toshinden* and *Virtua Fighter* have joined the fray. But the N64 has yet to commit itself fully to the cause.

Killer Instinct has of course made a massive impact and will ensure that gamers are initially well catered for when the machine finally appears, but combat fans will quickly be baying for more blood. And that's where *War Gods* comes in.

This 3D combat game, currently in unfinished coin-op form comes from Midway. The version we saw was barely 50% complete, and, while the rough edges were all too apparent (more on this later), it was easy enough to see that the developers' aim was to move not only beyond *Killer Instinct*, a game which is essentially two-dimensional, but also beyond the likes of *Tekken* in order to deliver the first beat-'em-up played within a 3D environment.

Games like *Tekken* and *Toshinden* on the PlayStation are, it must be said, 3D. The arenas and characters exist in 3D and are created in real time. But, fundamentally, the moves are much the same as those found in two-dimensional games. They're pre-determined, and characters are kept in line. Clever camera effects give the impression of freedom of movement around a 3D space, but this is an illusion.

War Gods overcomes this limitation with the use of a 3D button. On a basic level the characters have a wide range of 2D moves accessed by low and high punch and kick buttons and, of course, the directional joystick. Hold down the 3D button while performing these attacks, however, and your assaults on the enemy take on a whole new dimension. By doing

this you can then flip in and out of the screen, dodge sideways to avoid attack or perform moves from a totally different angle and manipulate your missile attacks in three dimensions for a greater breadth of possibilities.

So, *War Gods*' lofty aim of technically outgunning the existing Next Gen

DS

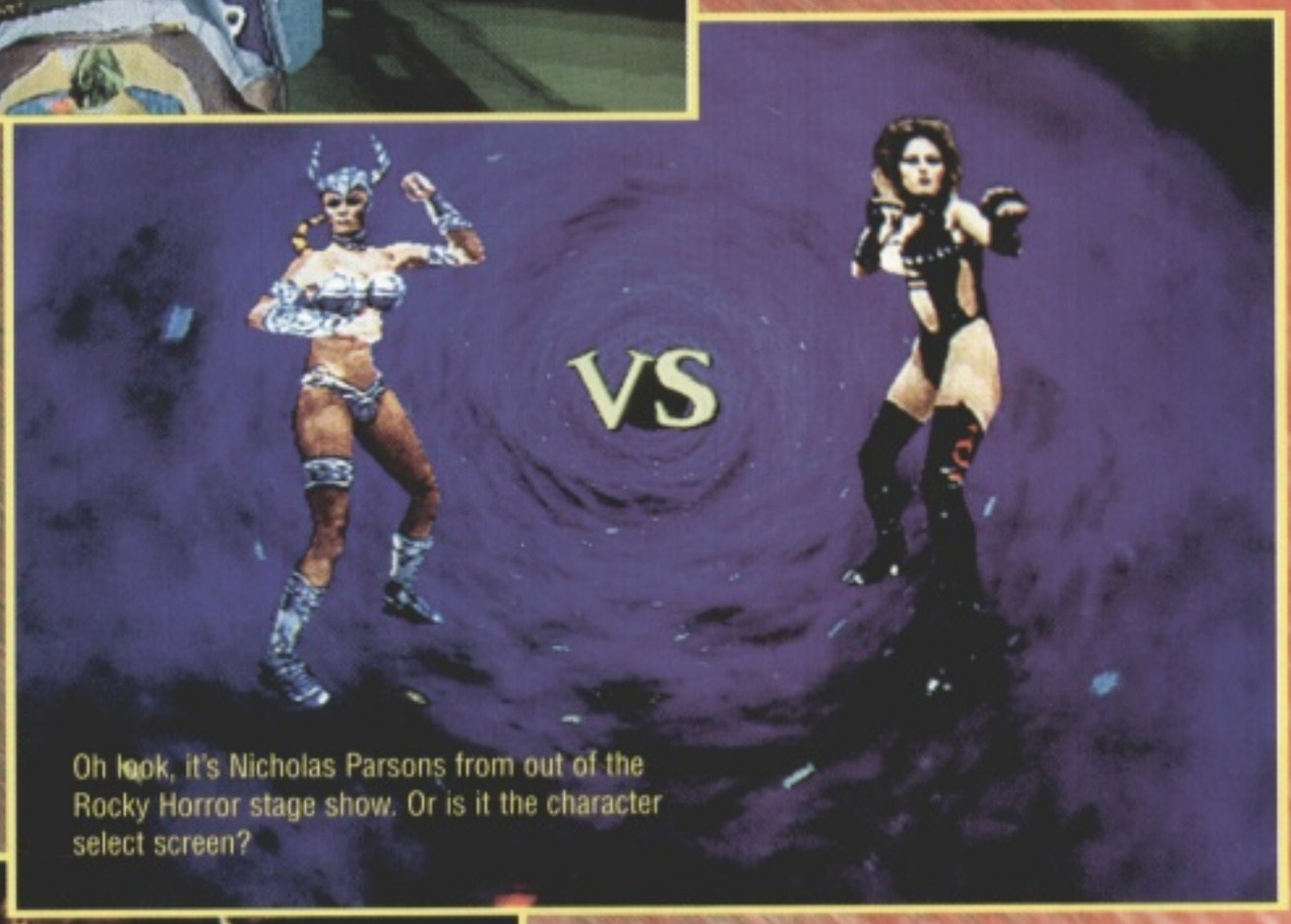
combat games seems to be progressing nicely. But a clever combat system is really only half the battle. After all, *Tekken*-type games have already delivered ultra-slick gameplay. But they've also delivered graphical quality, atmosphere and crucially, pure style. It is in these areas that *War Gods* currently falls down. It must be stated that the game is only partially developed but even so, there's a huge amount of work to be done if *War Gods* is to become a top class product.

Graphically it's still very lacking. Clever texture mapping provides the characters with smooth well-defined bodies, eliminating limbs which appear detached from their torsos, but the effect is spoiled by relatively poor animation, jerky movement and a generally unconvincing overall effect. The backdrops and arenas are also disappointing, lacking the scale and neat incidental effects that other games manage to cram in. On the gameplay side, the poor animation makes the combat slightly stilted and the lack of ring-outs leads to some very awkward edge-of-arena encounters. Probably most disconcerting of all are the characters themselves. It's hard to define the problem exactly, but they appear slightly tacky, characterless and somehow fail to fire the imagination of the player.

These are major problems, but again, given the unfinished nature of the game, this is not irreversible. However, the possibilities that the cleverly thought out 3D combat system throws up mean that *War Gods*, given the necessary treatment over the coming months, could become a beat-'em-up which makes the others sit up and take a good look at the way they've been doing things.

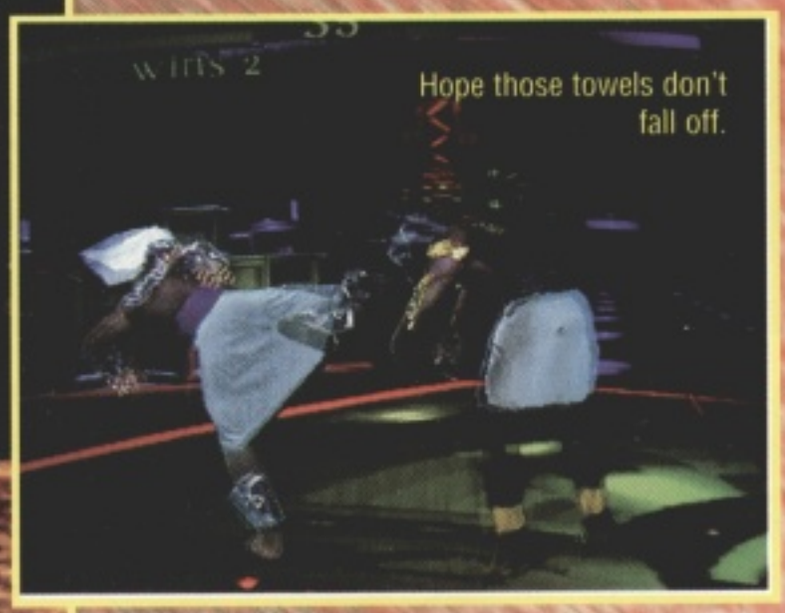
Considering he's won and everything, he doesn't look all that happy.

Nice title screen. Nice. Well, what do you want from us? Oh yeah, particularly attractive shade of green.



Oh look, it's Nicholas Parsons from out of the Rocky Horror stage show. Or is it the character select screen?

I'm sorry, but I don't believe that outfit can be in the slightest bit comfy.



Hope those towels don't fall off.

So much choice, so little time to write these captions...

SUPER STREET

In what must rank as the most unexpected – yet at the same time most welcome – announcement in the SNES's five-year history, Capcom have confirmed that the latest instalment of the Street Fighter series is heading for Nintendo's famed grey box. Talk about leaving the best 'til last...

Hopefully, Capcom will replace the drab backdrops of *Alpha* with some decent ones in SNES *SSFA*.

It's fair to say that *Street Fighter Alpha* revived the ailing Capcom's fortunes when it appeared in coin-op form last year. Although it wasn't exactly what everyone was expecting – bearing in mind gamers had already grown accustomed to 3D, polygon-based beat-'em-uppery thanks to Sega's *Virtua Fighter* series – **the game went on to become the kind of success story that most softcos experience in their more fantastical dreams.**

The reasons for its popularity aren't difficult to fathom. For starters, it has recognisable, bankable characters – after Mario, Ken and Ryu are perhaps the best-known stars the videogaming industry has ever produced, and their inclusion in *SFA* was a wise move on Capcom's part.

More importantly, perhaps, is that the pyjama-clad twosome slot into a tried-and-tested *SFII* gameplay template – a game engine that must now be familiar to just about *every* single person who's ever picked up a joypad or walked through the doors of a dingy coin-op emporium.

All these shots come from the PlayStation version, but SNES *Super* will be just about as attractive.

The balance of gameplay which goes up to make the full *SFA* experience is the really telling factor, though. In a master stroke, Capcom retained just enough of that raw *SFII* spirit while embellishing it with a carefully measured amount of tweakage to produce what ranks as the apex of the 2D beat-'em-up genre. But we'll talk about gameplay in detail later.

Changing faces

The most immediately obvious difference between *Alpha* and any of its *Street Fighter* forebears lies, patently, in the way it looks. Gone are the characters of old, replaced by clean-cut, almost cartoon-like images – the same type that Capcom first tried out in *Dark Stalkers* and later refined with *X-Men: Children Of The Atom*. The look is both stylish and distinctive and ensures that Capcom's output remain a step ahead of the likes of SNK's, whose titles have threatened to encroach upon the Big C's turf in recent years.

Capcom were slack in creating *SFA*'s backdrops, however, and it's really only here where it's picked up any valid criticism. Only six are on offer (so, yes, characters have to share stages instead of having one each of their own – a ridiculous state of affairs), and they whiff of three-week-old picnic eggs, with very little going on, animation-wise, and colour schemes that make John Major's wardrobe look like Joseph's.

Alpha too

Which brings us, rather conveniently, to *Street Fighter Alpha 2*, which has only recently made its coin-op debut in finished form (like most of Capcom's games, it enjoyed a limited release in beta form at a few select locations before getting a full roll-out).

Capcom claim that *Super Street Fighter Alpha* on the SNES will fall somewhere between *Alphas 1* and *2*. The latter game addressed the original's backdrop inadequacies by giving each fighter his/her own dedicated stage, each one featuring a rich level of detail and animation (there's one, for example, which features a kid playing on his Super Famicom who throws a bit of a wobbler if you lose the round). Hopefully, this will be one area at least that Capcom will bring forward to SNES *Super*.

Another desirable *SFA2* factor is its range of characters. *SFA* has 13 (ten selectable by default, three hidden), while its sequel presents a whopping great 18, the additional five being two revamped *SFII* faces of old (Zangief and Dhalsim), one ex-Final Fight character (Rolento) and two completely new to the scene (Gen, a fighter in the popular old-and-doddery-yet-lethal mould, and Sakura, a Japanese schoolgirl whose moves echo those of Ryu). While we're desperately hoping for the full 18-character roster, however, it's unfortunately likely that the new fighters will be

FIGHTER alpha

Super Street Fighter Alpha
Capcom • 48Mbit • Release: TBA

something Capcom *won't* be able to squeeze into *SSFA*'s 48 megabits.

All change

So let's have a look at what definitely *will* be in there, by examining the original *SFA*'s gameplay nuances. First, and most important, are Super Moves. Also known as Shadow Moves (so-called because of the shadow-like wake left behind your fighter when you successfully pull one off), they're generally executed by performing a succession of either normal or reverse Fireball motions with the D-pad, followed by a single firebutton press or two or all three simultaneously (either punch or kick). The power you choose depends upon the fullness of your Power meter, which sits at the foot of the screen. This is charged almost continuously as you strike, block or pull off special moves throughout a fight, and has three distinct markers which dictate which strength of Super Move you're able to unleash at any given time. Supers hit for more damage than normal blows (obviously) and are easily the high points of the game, visually – landing Ken's full-strength Dragon Punch Super ranks as one of videogaming's greatest moments, it's that satisfying. Each character has between two and four of these Supers, and, while their appearance will undoubtedly be toned down slightly for the SNES version, their dramatic flavour should nevertheless be retained.

Two other significant changes are aimed at drawing in those who lack *Street Fighter II* expertise. Selecting Auto Block before entering a match will let you concentrate on out-and-out attacking play; your fighter will block incoming offensive moves without you needing to pull away from them with the D-pad. Air Blocking is its logical update stablemate: as in *X-Men: Children Of The Atom*, you can be almost as safe from harm while airborne as you are standing on terra

Capcom introduced Chain combos to *Alpha* then took them out in *Alpha 2*. Will *Super* have them? Hmmm.

firma – a feature never before seen in *SFII* games, and one which many fans have cried out for over the last few years.

Capcom have stolen from 3D beat-'em-ups such as *Tekken* in giving fighters the opportunity to recover from a struck-down position by rolling out and back into the fray rather than simply standing straight back up. The advantage in combat chiefly lies in advancing towards a fireball-luzzing opponent, and all the move requires is a nifty reverse fireball motion on the D-pad.

The last major change is a simple one: by pressing start at any point in a bout your fighter will perform a Taunt – a cheeky show of disregard for your opponent (Adon, for example, gives his opponent the thumbs-down, implying that that's where they're headed). You can only do you it once per bout (unless you're playing as Dan, who can do it as many times as he likes, for some reason), and it's best used after dealing your opponent an umpteen-hit combo, where you can match the smirk of satisfaction on your own face with an equivalently derisory expression on-screen.

A kiss of life

The existing conversions of *SFA* on the PlayStation and Saturn are in some respects better than the coin-op upon which they're based, with remixed music pulled directly off CD and a ramp of extra options. While the all-new music obviously won't make it to the SNES – and the coin-op's intro sequence will certainly be trimmed down – the only other changes are likely to be in animation terms, with a loss of a couple of (admittedly inconsequential) frames here and there.

Capcom's decision to continue working on the SNES after losing so much cash in the cartridge market last year has come as a big surprise, especially considering that *SSFA* is likely to be one of the most expensive carts ever released, and, therefore, a risky product to have out there on the shelves. It's also especially odd considering that they've shunned the SNES in favour of 32-bit platforms for home releases of games such as *Dark Stalkers*, *Night Warriors* and *X-Men: Children Of The Atom*. One rumour circulating within the industry suggests that Nintendo have struck a deal with Capcom on the basis that if they want to develop for the Nintendo 64 they had to support the SNES with one more large-scale release.

Whatever the reasoning behind its genesis, *Super Street Fighter Alpha* is, along with Nintendo's sparkling SNES line-up at E3 in Los Angeles (see next month's ish), just one more reason to get excited about your little 16-bit chum all over again.

Eat Shadow Move, Charlie. Gamefreaks will note the old Capcom game reference in the backdrop.

PROFILES

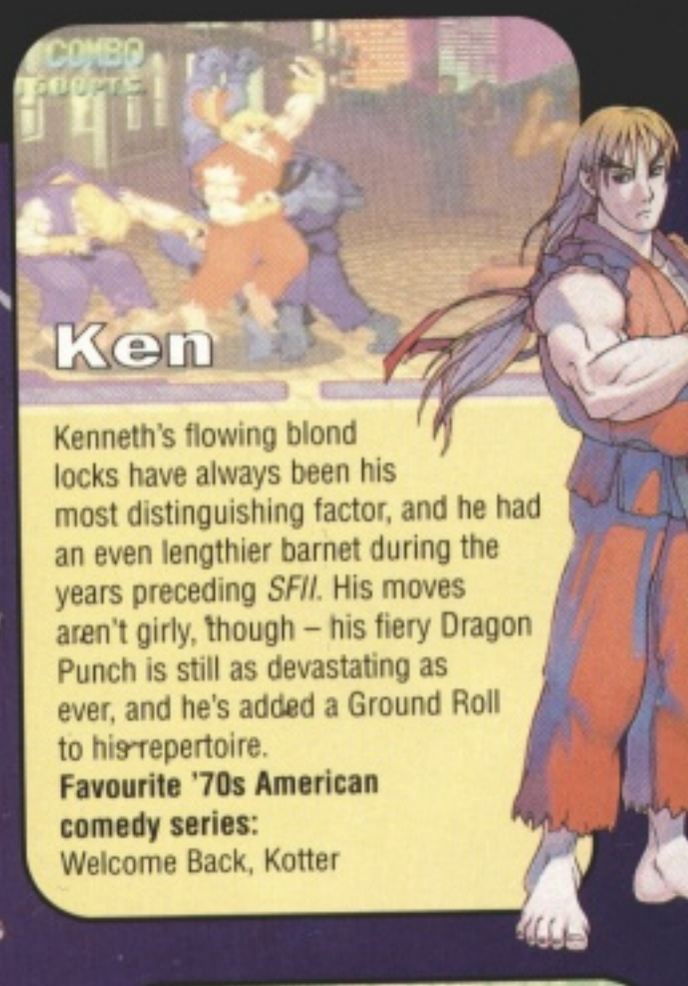
No-one creates fighters like Capcom, and those of the *Street Fighter* series are some of the most charismatic ever seen.

It's unlikely that the full 18 characters from *SFA2* will make it into *SSFA* on the SNES, but these ten fighters most definitely will be there in all their battle-hardened, brow-furrowed, sweat-sodden glory.

Because the storyline of *Street Fighter Alpha* predates that of the original *Street Fighter*, you'll notice that it's a pretty youthful bunch, compared to what you're familiar with.

Ryu

Does our favourite pyjama-clad pugilist really need introducing? Of course not. All you need to know is that his *SFA* incarnation is notable for his red hair, extra-long bandana, and stockier build. His patented fireball has been updated and he has an all-new overhead punch.
Favourite pot plant: Azalea



Ken

Kenneth's flowing blond locks have always been his most distinguishing factor, and he had an even lengthier barnet during the years preceding *SFII*. His moves aren't girly, though – his fiery Dragon Punch is still as devastating as ever, and he's added a Ground Roll to his repertoire.
Favourite '70s American comedy series:
Welcome Back, Kotter

Rose

Undoubtedly *SFA*'s most mysterious fighter, Rose's moves are steeped in mysticism, lending some fans to compare her to a *Night Warriors* combatant called Anita. As graceful as she is a bit lethal, she's destined for Chunners-like status in the minds of *SFA* fans.
Favourite D&D monster:
Ochre Jelly

Adon

Reputedly a student of Sagat's, Adon is another character who borrows moves that, like Charlie, bear similarities to those of his associates. His Jaguar Knee move is a close relative of Sagat's Tiger Crush, but he also has a string of his own Jaguar-branded moves, too.
Favourite EastEnders star:
Ricky

Guy

You ignored him in *Final Fight*, preferring the altogether more handy Haggar or Cody, but Capcom have nevertheless elected to plonk him in *SFA*. He still has his rather noncy walk, and his Rising Spin Kick also comes straight out of *FF*. He's a nippy feller, nevertheless.
Favourite biscuit: Garibaldi

FIGHTER'S HISTORY

One of videogaming's biggest legends began life back in 1987 with the coin-op release of *Street Fighter*, Capcom's graphically intensive beat-'em-up starring a Ken, Ryu and Sagat. Interestingly, it was a gimmick that was to make up a significant part of the success that followed with its sequel: its cabinet featured pressure-sensitive pads which reproduced relevant moves on-screen depending on whether you hit them with light, medium or hard force. Suffice it to say that this was hardly a practical system for gamers (who tired rapidly of such a novelty feature) or arcade operators (who had to deal with the headache of easily broken cabinets), and a simpler system became the replacement of choice – six fire buttons, three each for hands and feet.

Thus, in 1991, *Street Fighter II*'s initially bewildering gameplay was born. Once arcade-goers became comfortable with the flexibility of its controls (many shunned it upon first sight simply because it seemed unnecessarily elaborate), the game went on to become the second-biggest coin-op money-spinner ever, after Namco's 1980 smash, *Pac-Man*.

Realising that they had a major property on their hands, Capcom swiftly followed it up with the release of *Street Fighter II Championship Edition* in 1992, a clever move considering they didn't have to change much at all – the chief difference was that gamers could finally 'be' one of the four bosses that they'd previously held in varying degrees of awe. A trend was instantly set. Picking up on gamers' ecstatic responses, Capcom would never again produce a game that included characters which the player would not be able to control (although, admittedly, 'be'ing certain characters in later editions would involve no small amount of cheatage).

Bigger changes happened the following year with the release of *Street Fighter II Turbo*, which, as well as introducing never-before-considered levels of speed to the mix, gave many existing characters proper enhancements – Chun Li gained a fireball attack, for example, while Dhalsim acquired the ability to teleport. Capcom duly had a *fourth SF* hit, and subsequently parped out a SNES conversion which was to prove one of the system's best ever games.

Turbo's successor, *Super Street Fighter II*, was the first game since *SFII* to introduce new characters, in the form of Fei Long, Cammy, T Hawk and Dee Jay. Despite enjoying respectable turnover, many loyal *SF*-ites consider *SSFII* to be the weak link in the legend's chain, claiming its new characters to be not a patch on Ryu and company. Though this could simply be preciousness on the part of *SFII* elitists, the fact that it was the first in the series to have design input from Capcom's US staff perhaps shouldn't be overlooked.

Naturally, a *Turbo* version followed, and, although it attracted a following from die-hard *SFII* loyalists, many felt that the magic was beginning to wane.

But then *Street Fighter Alpha* happened...

Sagat

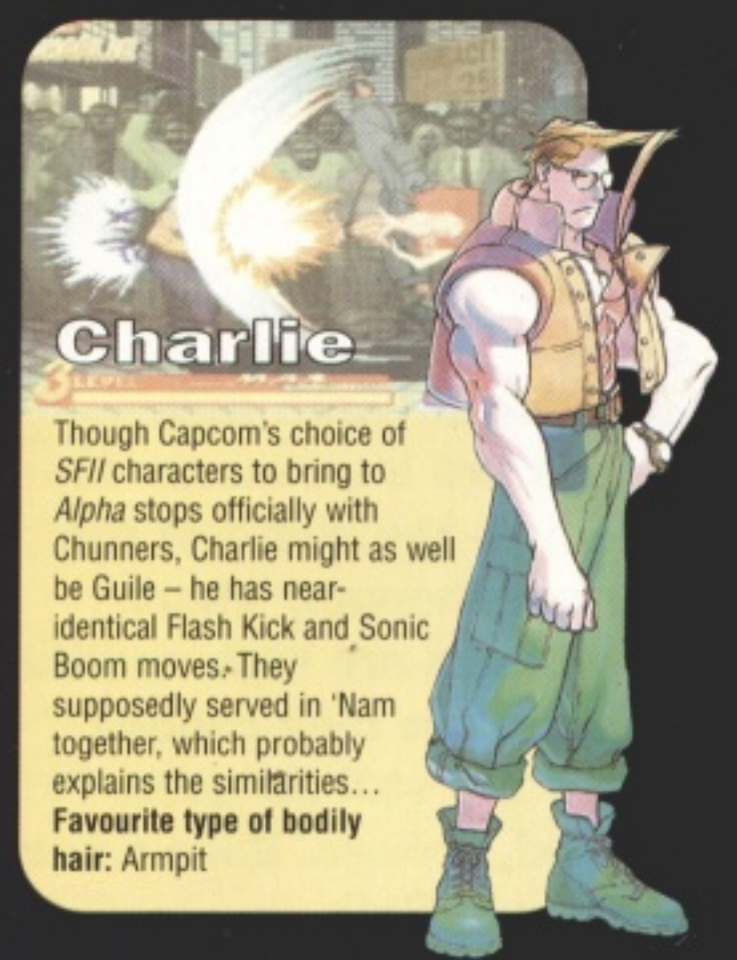
Old baldy is undoubtedly the biggest character in *SFA*, and his presence makes not only a daunting-looking opponent but an easier target to boot. His Tiger Blow is the replacement for his Tiger Uppercut, and hits for a bout-turningly effective seven hits. Cor lumme, mother.

Favourite affliction: Acne vulgaris

Chun-Li

Officially the world's most commonly lusted-after collection of pixels, Ms. Li's *SFA* incarnation sees her covering her famous legs with some fancy strides and losing her much-loved Spinning Bird Kick. In its place is a Cammy-esque Split Kick, though. (Hurrah.)

Favourite breakfast cereal: Banana Bubbles



Charlie

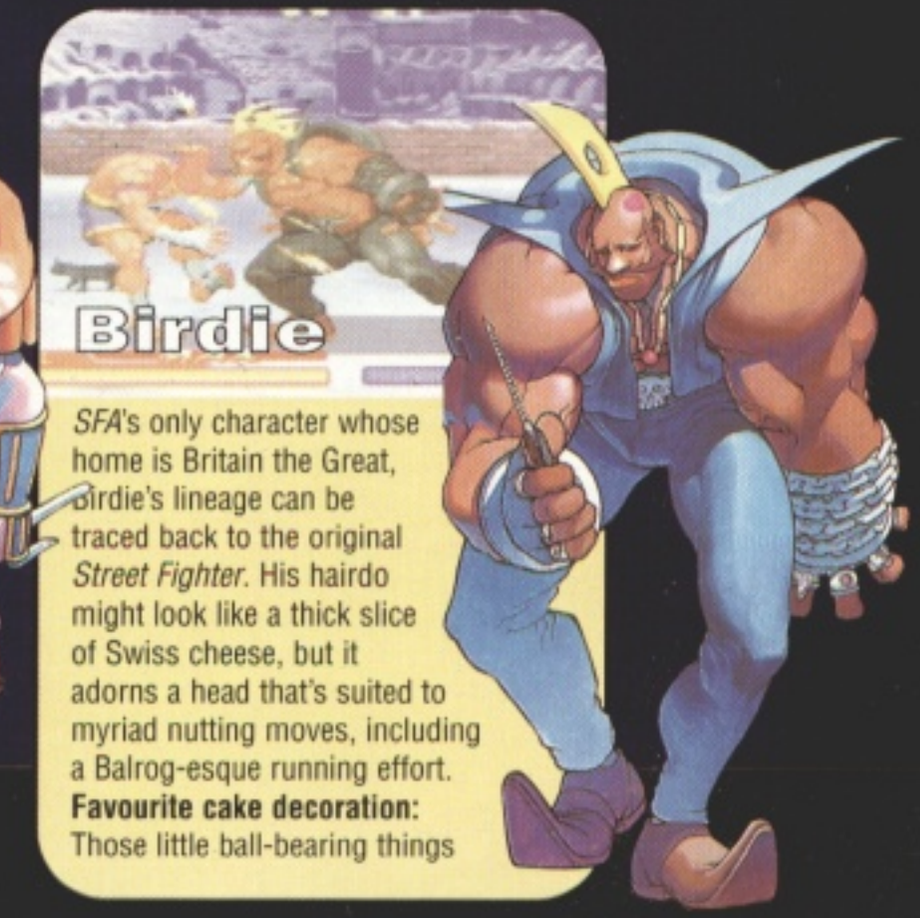
Though Capcom's choice of *SFII* characters to bring to *Alpha* stops officially with Chunners, Charlie might as well be Guile – he has near-identical Flash Kick and Sonic Boom moves. They supposedly served in 'Nam together, which probably explains the similarities...

Favourite type of bodily hair: Armpit

Sodom

Final Fight fans will recognise this geezer as a boss from the boxing ring section of Capcom's premier scrolly beat-'em-up. His jitte blades are lethal blighters, but he's not the fastest character in the game and his moves err towards grappling rather than strike attacks.

Favourite type of shoe: The flip-flop



Birdie

SFA's only character whose home is Britain the Great, Birdie's lineage can be traced back to the original *Street Fighter*. His hairdo might look like a thick slice of Swiss cheese, but it adorns a head that's suited to myriad nutting moves, including a Balrog-esque running effort.

Favourite cake decoration: Those little ball-bearing things

THE OTHERS

It's unlikely that the full 18 characters from *SFA2* will make it into *SSFA* on the SNES, but these ten fighters most definitely will be there in all their battle-hardened, sweat-sodden glory. Because the storyline of *Street Fighter Alpha* predates even the original Street Fighter, you'll notice that it's a pretty youthful bunch.

BARGAIN HUNTER

Bath – home of baths (hey – there's a surprise), buns and the swollen oracle that is Future Publishing. An average city, jammed with reasonably average shops and hideously reproductive shoppers. So where better to examine exactly what the High Street shops have to offer us SNES owners? Yes, our essential buyers' guide shifts to 'regular retail' this month after our brief excursion into mail order in issue 44. It'll probably come as no surprise to learn that things are a lot more pricey in the world of the normal shopper, where overheads are high and the punters are less choosy. There are still bargains to be had, though. Here's how we found Bath...

DIXONS

Tel: 01225 484118

A decent well-stocked selection of titles and competitive pricing have always ensured that D-D-D-Dixons is firmly on the gaming map. For our money, after the dedicated games stores, this should always be your first port of call.

International Superstar Soccer	£14.99
Illusion Of Time	£19.99
Kid Klown in Crazy Chase	£19.99
Mortal Kombat 2	£19.99
Rise of the Robots	£19.99
Street Racer	£19.99
Super Punch Out	£19.99
Weaponlord	£19.99
Zoop	£19.99
Dragon	£24.99
Donkey Kong Country	£29.99
Frantic Flea	£29.99
Killer Instinct	£29.99
Micro Machines 2	£29.99
Super International Cricket	£29.99
Tetris/Dr Mario	£29.99
Super Mario Kart	£32.99
Fever Pitch Soccer	£34.99
Mask	£34.99
Super Bomberman 3	£34.99
FIFA '96	£39.99
Theme Park	£39.99
Donkey Kong Country 2	£44.99
Doom	£44.99
Secret of Evermore	£44.99
Yoshi's Island	£44.99
Super Mario All Stars	£49.99
SNES with DKC2 or Yoshi's Island	£129.95

Super Play Choice

International Superstar Soccer
Mortal Kombat 2
Street Racer

PRICE – £55

WH SMITHS

Tel: 01225 460522

Old, reliable Smiths proved to be rather disappointing. As is the case in the High Street these days, everyone's going PC potty. And Smiths is no exception, with the shelves spilling over with CD-ROM software. Our local store – pretty large as Smiths go – only carried the four titles currently in their charts. Very disappointing.

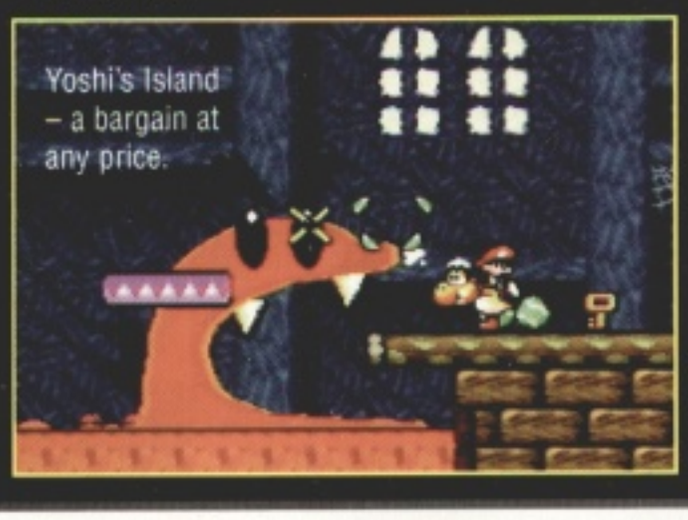
ISS Deluxe	£39.99
Doom	£42.99
Theme Park	£44.99
FIFA '96	£49.99

OUR PRICE

Tel: 01225 461580

Your city just ain't no real city if it ain't got no Our Price. The choice is fairly limited, but the back catalogue prices are pretty good for a music store (just check out cart costs at HMV) – lots of decent titles around the £20 mark.

Kick Off 3	£9.99
Blackhawk	£19.99
Fever Pitch Soccer	£19.99
Jungle Strike	£19.99
Lawnmower Man	£19.99
Rise of the Robots	£19.99
Super Metroid	£19.99
Cannon Fodder	£24.99
Killer Instinct	£29.99
Urban Strike	£29.99



Batman Forever	£39.99
Mickey Mania	£39.99
Donkey Kong Country 2	£42.99
ISS Deluxe	£42.99
Yoshi's Island	£44.99
Donkey Kong Country 2	£42.99
ISS Deluxe	£42.99
Yoshi's Island	£44.99

Super Play Choice

Kick Off 3
Cannon Fodder
Super Metroid

PRICE – £55

HMV

Tel: 01225 466681

A record store that's a clear supporter of videogames, and is noticeable for its firm shift into shiny, shimmering PC/PlayStation /Saturn territory. Their prices are pretty much the 'standard' RRP, but they do tend to have pretty frequent sales. Always worth a look.

Cybernator	£12.99
Zoop	£34.99
FIFA '96	£37.99
International Superstar Soccer	£37.99
Super International Cricket	£39.99
Micro Machines 2	£39.99
Yoshi's Island	£44.99
Donkey Kong Country	£44.99
Kid Klown in Crazy Chase	£44.99
Secret Of Evermore	£44.99
Doom	£44.99
Demolition Man	£44.99
Fever Pitch	£49.99
Illusion Of Time	£44.99
Unirally	£44.99
Primal Rage	£44.99
Theme Park	£44.99

Doom at HMV includes the special 'Dog with his head stuck in a gramaphone' weapon.

WWF Wrestlemania	£49.99
NBA Jam TE	£49.99
Mortal Kombat 3	£54.99
ISS Deluxe	£59.99
Weaponlord	£59.99
Programmable Energizer Pad	£19.99

Super Play Choice

Cybernator
Micro Machines 2

PRICE – £53

John Menzies

Tel: 01225 460905

Seem to be slightly out of touch with the gaming scene, with no bargains on offer. There was no title sub-£30, which is a Very Bad Thing. And £50 for *Bomberman 2*, when the third in the series is out for the same price? The amount of titles for around £60 was just frightening. So we don't feel we could possibly recommend any money-saving combos. There weren't any.

Zoop	£32.99
International Superstar Soccer	£34.99
FIFA '96	£39.99
Weaponlord	£39.99
Kid Klown in Crazy Chase	£44.99
Micro Machines 2	£44.99
Super Punch Out	£44.99
World Masters	£44.99
Beavis & Butthead	£49.99
Cannon Fodder	£49.99
NHL '96	£49.99
PGA Tour '96	£49.99
Super Bomberman 2	£49.99
Super Bomberman 3	£49.99
Earthworm Jim 2	£54.99
Donkey Kong Country	£59.99
Doom	£59.99
ISS Deluxe	£59.99
Mortal Kombat 3	£59.99
Primal Rage	£59.99
WWF Wrestlemania	£59.99
NBA Jam TE	£64.99

ELECTRONICS BOUTIQUE

Tel: 01225 464164

Has "Lowest Price Guarantee" splashed all over the carts and boasts an extensive range of titles. Has also moved into the second-hand market, and these 'Pre-Owned' bins are the places you've got to start your High Street bargain purge. Also operates a Trade-In system for certain titles.

Battleclash	£9.99
Kick Off 3	£19.99
Plok	£19.99
Zoop	£19.99
Hebereke's Popoitto	£24.99
Smash Tennis	£24.99
Wario's Woods	£24.99
Brutal (Paws of Fury)	£29.99
Hungry Dinosaur	£29.99
Killer Instinct	£29.99
(£11.99 when trading in three 16-bit games)	
Phantom 2040	£29.99
Primal Rage	£29.99
FIFA '96	£34.99
(£16.99 when trading in three 16-bit games)	
Aargh! Real Monsters	£39.99
Big Hurt Baseball	£39.99
Big Sky Trooper	£39.99
Boogerman	£39.99
(£21.99 when trading in three 16-bit games)	
Doom	£39.99
(£21.99 when trading in three 16-bit games)	
Great Circus Mystery	£39.99
ISS Deluxe	£39.99
Izzy's Quest for the Olympic Rings	£39.99
Judge Dredd	£39.99
Justice League Task Force	£39.99
Mega Man 7	£39.99
Mega Man X2	£39.99
Micro Machines 2	£39.99
(£21.99 when trading in three 16-bit games)	
NFL Quaterback Club	£39.99
Porky Pig's Haunted Holiday	£39.99
Theme Park	£39.99
Weaponlord	£39.99
(£21.99 when trading in three 16-bit games)	
Donkey Kong Country 2	£44.99
Earthworm Jim 2	£49.99
Revolution X	£49.99
Spawn	£49.99
WWF Wrestlemania	£49.99
PRE-OWNED (SECOND-HAND)...	
Kick Off	£14.99
SF2 (No cover)	£14.99
Pop 'n' Twinbee (No cover)	£14.99
Striker	£17.99
WWF Wrestlemania (No cover)	£17.99
Mortal Kombat 2	£24.99
Return of the Jedi	£24.99
Earthworm Jim	£27.99

Super Play Choice

Hebereke's Popoitto
Killer Instinct
SF2 (pre-owned)

Smash Tennis

PRICE – £95

ARGOS

Tel: 01225 462762

The catalogue company, as you'd expect, charge pretty much regular prices. They do seem to have one of the best hardware deals on at the moment (actual consoles seem pretty thin on the ground in the High Street) – a SNES with *Mario All Stars* and *Super Mario World* for under £110.

Killer Instinct	£29.99
Super International Cricket	£34.75
Donkey Kong Country 2	£44.99
Mortal Kombat 3	£59.99
SNES with Mario All Stars and Super Mario World (on one cart)	£109
SNES with Mario All Stars and Super Mario World (on one cart)	£109

You WILL give me a discount mister!

One thing we can be sure about after examining these High Street stores is that shopping around is more important than ever before. It's not just a matter of saving £2 here and there, but, by selective shopping you can save up to £20 a time. There also seems to be a greater difference in pricing than you get with mail order companies.

*All prices were correct for Bath branches of the above stores at time of going to press.

PLAYING ALL OVER THE WORLD

With the increasing need to look to import releases to top up your games collection, not to mention the massive back-catalogue of games that have never been released in the UK, an adaptor is a vital accessory for any serious SNES owner. Unfortunately, it's not quite as simple as that. There are many different ways in which games can check on the type of machine they are running on, and a range of adaptors designed to combat these techniques. But which is best? Let Super Play end the confusion...

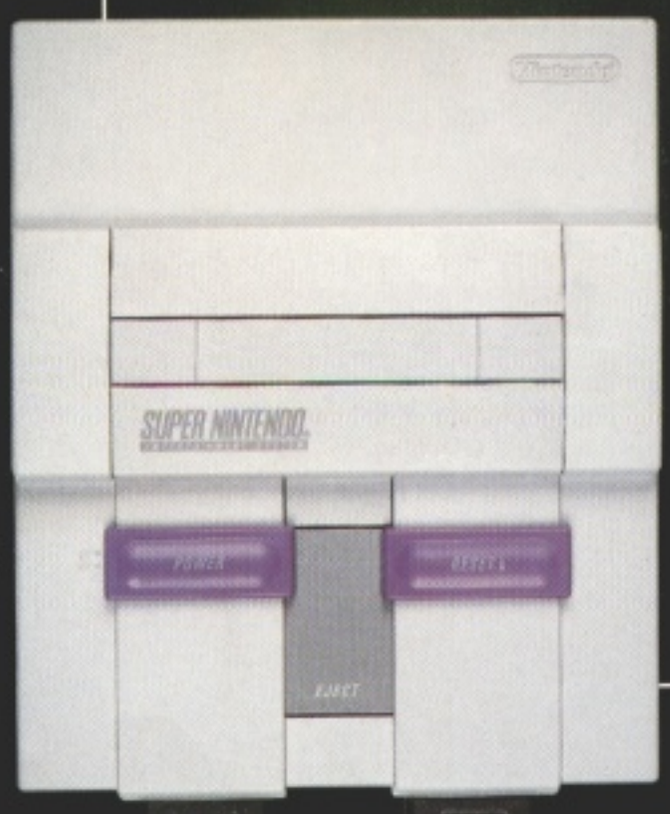
There are three different types of SNES – UK, American and Japanese. The American and Japanese machines are almost identical internally, although the cases are completely different. The UK machine looks identical to the Japanese machine (apart from the logo), but unlike the American and Japanese machines which run at 60Hz and provide an NTSC TV signal, the British machine runs at 50Hz (to match our televisions) and provides a PAL signal. The cartridge slots are different shapes too, with the American machine featuring a more square-shaped slot. This means that Japanese/UK cartridges will not fit into an American machine, or vice-versa.

American machines can easily be modified by removing two plastic bars from the machine (a simple operation), allowing them to accept any cartridge.

Unfortunately the same can not be said for Japanese or UK machines – short of completely destroying the case, there is absolutely no way of getting them to accept an American games cartridge without using an adaptor.

A MACHINE FOR ALL SEASONS

USA

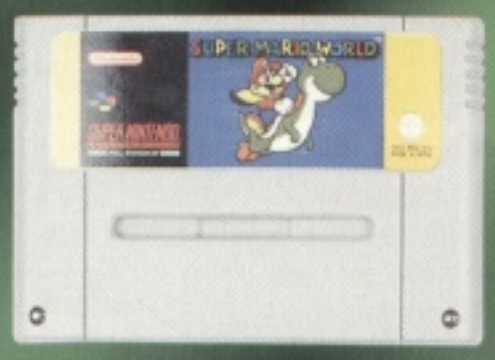


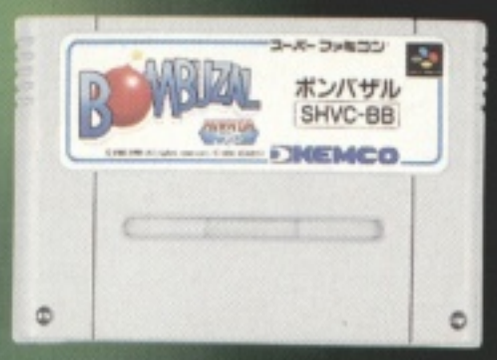
EUROPE

JAPAN

Bridge adaptors

Bridge adaptors are the simplest type of adaptor. All they do is sit in the cartridge slot of the machine and allow any type of cartridge to be connected to any SNES without the cartridge shape/case shape causing problems. However, as we will see, they are only useful for running Japanese games on American machines (and vice-versa) or for running games on specially converted machines.





Software protection isn't the only problem facing the potential import games player. The physical shape and size difference of the US cart (Left) won't let it fit into a UK or Japanese machine.

The security chip

Both the original NES and the SNES (but not the Game Boy) are fitted with a "security chip" system. This system is used by Nintendo for several reasons. Firstly, it prevents unlicensed third-party companies from producing cartridges themselves – it is perfectly possible to write SNES games without Nintendo's permission, but to manufacture working cartridges the company would have to copy the security chip, and this would breach Nintendo's copyright. Secondly, it supposedly cuts down on software piracy, for the same reasons, and thirdly, it makes importing games much more difficult.

The security chip system works by having two chips – one in the SNES and one in the cartridge. These communicate using four pins on the cartridge edge connector, and, when the SNES is switched on, they send back and forth a complex series of codes. If the codes do not match up, then the chip in the SNES shuts down the machine, resulting in a blank screen.

There are two different types of security chip – the Japanese/American chip, and the UK chip. This means that whilst a Japanese game will run on an American SNES (once the physical cartridge differences have been resolved), a Japanese game will not run on a UK machine, despite the fact that the cartridge fits perfectly! Enter the second generation of adaptors... Security chip adaptors.

These "second-generation" adaptors bypass the security-chip system, allowing almost any game to run on any SNES. In the early days of the SNES there were few exceptions, but now there are a large number of games which will not work through these simplistic adaptors.

They work in the same way as a bridge adaptor, sitting in the slot and allowing a cartridge to be plugged in on top. However, security chip adaptors also require a second cartridge, of a type which does work on the machine, usually plugged into the rear of the unit. What happens is that the adaptor connects all the normal edge connections from the SNES to the cartridge on the top (allowing the SNES to read data from it normally), but the four security chip pins are connected to the second cartridge, causing the chip in the SNES to talk to it instead. As a result, the game runs normally. The very first security chip adaptors had difficulty running games such as *Pilotwings* and *Mario Kart* which used DSP chips to assist with the graphics. No adaptors available today should have these problems, though.

Spanner in the works

The first game to really cause adaptor problems was the classic *StarFox* (*StarWing* in the UK). The problem is that it uses a model 1 Super FX chip to generate the 3D graphics, and part of the way the Super FX chip works means that it uses one of the extra pins on the edge connector, offset to one side. Up until this point, these pins had remained unused, and no adaptors bothered connecting them through. Without this pin, however, *StarFox* refuses to run (I suspect it is used by the Super FX chip for synchronisation with the SNES, but I can't be sure). As a result, for a while it was impossible to run a Japanese or American copy of *StarFox* on a UK machine. Ever ingenious, the adaptor manufacturers released new adaptors, now with the extra pins connected. However, even with this, it is still (to the best of our knowledge) impossible to run a UK copy of *StarFox* on a Japanese/American machine, due to the speed difference.

An interesting point is that *StarFox* is the only game to suffer from this problem. Newer games use the Super FX 2 chip, which doesn't use the extra pins at all! For some reason, though, Nintendo has still included the pins on the cartridge.

Software protection

The next Nintendo invention was "software protection". This works by getting the game itself to check how fast the machine is running. It can tell whether it is running on a 50Hz (UK) machine, or a 60Hz (Japanese/American) machine. Software protection is easy to spot, as the game will produce a message along the lines of "This game is not intended for use on your Super Famicom/Super NES" on screen and refuse to run. Some Nintendo games even go as far as to say "Using this adaptor will damage your machine"!

This problem is much more tricky to get round (without having to actually speed up/slow down the machine). There are now "intelligent" adaptors on the market, which can fool the software protection by checking for the sequence of instructions in the game and modifying them (not by modifying the actual cartridge, but by intercepting the instructions as they are sent to the SNES and modifying them then). This works quite well, but if the game uses non-standard instructions to perform the check, then it will fail. As a result, it appears that adaptors include a list of games which are exceptions to the rule, and special modifications for those games. Unfortunately this will not work on new games!

WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

Nintendo often claim that using adaptors will damage your machine. Whilst this is generally untrue, there are some things that should be avoided...

1) Using too many adaptors
If too many cartridges/adaptors are connected to one machine, it will probably blow the fuse inside the machine (which can be replaced, but you need a special screwdriver to open the case), and it certainly won't get the game to work!

2) Plugging in cartridges the wrong way round
This is normally impossible due to the shape of the cartridge slot, but with an adaptor in place it is possible to do it accidentally, almost certainly resulting in damage to the machine.

3) Plugging in or removing cartridges with the power on
Again, this is impossible with a normal SNES, but, with an adaptor fitted it, is quite possible. While less potentially dangerous than connecting cartridges backwards, it can damage the machine, and is likely to wipe any saved games.

A couple of other points, less important, but still worth noting are :

4) Try not to use a cartridge with battery back-up (for scores/saved games) as the "key" cartridge (the one at the back) in an adaptor. Whilst this shouldn't be a problem, it had been known to cause crashes and to wipe saved games.

5) Sometimes swapping a cartridge between machines can wipe saved games. If you use the same cartridge on both UK and American/Japanese machines, especially through an adaptor, it can sometimes wipe the saved games. Try to stick to one machine type if possible.

Programmable adaptors

"Programmable adaptors" are a fairly recent development, and, to the best of our knowledge, only one programmable adaptor is available (manufactured by Datel).

These adaptors have all the features of the others, but include the option to enter codes to fix games which contain non-standard software protection, effectively "future-proofing" the unit. In fact, this is the same system that has been available on cheating devices such as the Action Replay for years, and a programmable adaptor can be used as a sort of cut-down cheat cartridge – the Datel programmable adaptor can be used to enter "ROM-type" Action Replay codes (those beginning with 00) for games such as *StarFox*. Programmable adaptors, at the moment, seem to provide the closest thing to a "perfect solution" to the compatibility problem.

The price of power

The only problem with the newer adaptors is that as they become more advanced, it becomes much easier to detect the adaptor itself! This means that if all that is required is a bridge adaptor (to run a Japanese game on an American machine, for example), and a more advanced adaptor is used, then the game may detect it and refuse to run.

The unfortunate few

Unfortunately, there are still a handful of games that won't work properly no matter which type of adaptor is used. Even more unfortunately, these are not obscure titles but some of the most successful, such as *Final Fantasy III*. The reason these games don't work (they run but crash a lot, erase saved games and other such antisocial behaviour) is not because of any deliberate protection, but because they use very clever techniques, which rely heavily on the machine speed and timing. As a result, the only known way to get these games to run reliably is to actually alter the machine speed.

Whilst modern adaptors can provide an almost complete solution to the system incompatibility problem, the only total solution to the problem is to run the game on the machine it was designed for. Strangely, Nintendo seem to be a little confused themselves, recently, over the software protection issue – whilst *Donkey Kong Country II* has a very advanced protection system which seems to prevent it being run on a different machine even with a programmable adaptor, *Yoshi's Island* has the older system! A good rule with newer games is to phone the company that produced your adaptor and ask them if it will work, although even this is not guaranteed to get you the right answer.

SUPER PLAY RECOMMENDS

If you've got a normal (not modified) machine, then your best buy is probably the Datel Programmable Adaptor, as it runs nearly everything available, and is virtually future-proofed with its code-entry feature. However, if you've got the extra money and would like to cheat too, the Datel Action Replay III provides all the same features as well as the normal cheating functions. Finally, if you have a modified machine (50/60Hz switchable), then you are probably better off getting the simplest adaptor you can find, either the Datel Universal Adaptor, the Fire SFX adaptor or, if you can find one, a bridge adaptor.

PRICE DETAILS

We shopped around for the most freely available adaptors... Here's a guide to what you can expect to pay.

Datel Programmable Adaptor £25*

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*All prices are approximate

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Left: A windswept Catty amidst the sand dunes in *Gall Force – Earth Chapter*. Available later this year from Manga Video.

Below: Rally and MiniMay take offence at some innocent Chicago trash men.

Rally Vincent says, "Buy my video or I'll shoot you". The sort of girl you'd want to take home to your mother.

Kenichi Sonoda

ANIME WORLD

Pronounced 'ahh-nee-may'

Talk to any dyed in the wool anime fan about fast action and slick looks, and sooner or later the name Kenichi Sonoda will come up. This thirty-four year old Osaka-born artist has left his mark on some of anime's most popular action-adventures, as one of the late 80s' best known character designers.

Sonoda started off drawing characters for Manga comics and advertising work, at the same time indulging his otaku passion for dynamic female characters and mechanical hardware. A self-confessed gun nut and vintage car fanboy, Sonoda's work reflects his loves, and none more so than his latest hit, *Gunsmith Cats* (see Irresponsible Pictures, page 78). Originally a Manga strip in the anthology magazine *Comic Morning*, Sonoda's contemporary tale of urban gunplay and hi-speed action is still going strong, in its sixth Japanese volume and having just completed its first run translated into English. With his track record firmly in place, Sonoda's *Gunsmith Cats* has made the leap to animated series as the newest in a long line of successes.

But back to the beginning for a moment; Sonoda really came to the fore after designing the characters for a photo-story in *Model Graphix* magazine called *Star Front Gall Force*. After having cut his teeth on a so-so lady wrestling drama called *Wanna-bes*, the designer leapt into the fray when an anime version of *Star Front* was announced – *Gall Force: Eternal Story* proved popular enough to merit two sequels, Destruction and Stardust War, and later it would be followed by two more series. The Gall Force saga showed off Sonoda's skills perfectly, mixing attractive and powerful female characters with science-fiction high-tech toys – Sonoda returned to the series in later years for the spoof *Ten Little Gall Force* and the follow-up series *Gall Force: Earth Chapter* and *Gall Force: New Century*.

But by far the series' that carry Sonoda's stamp the most are *Bubblegum Crisis* and its sequel *Bubblegum Crash*. Sonoda was responsible for the look and feel of this series and its leads. Like *Gall Force*, *Bubblegum Crisis* faced off a group of tough and resourceful women against an intractable enemy. In this case it was the ruthless Genom corporation, a dark force out to take control of mankind's destiny by utilising its android "boomers", Terminator-like cyborgs, to destroy any who stood in its

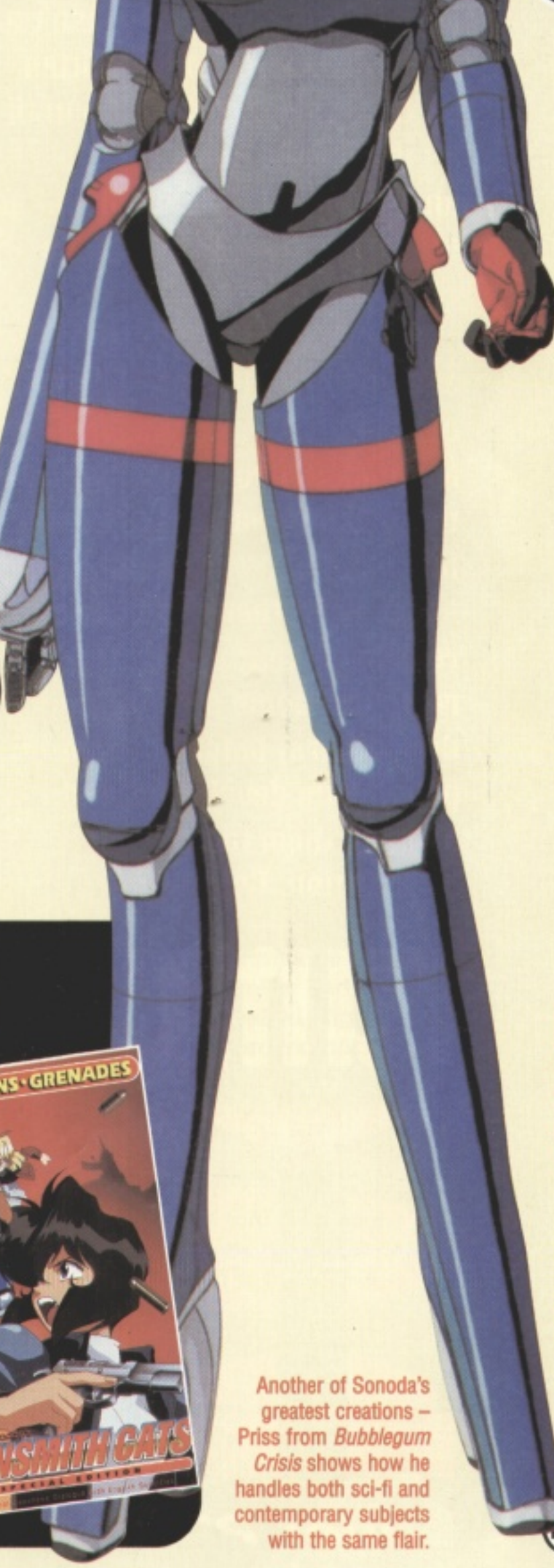
path. Enter the Knight Sabers, a quartet of women out to even the balance with their cyberlinked "hard suits". Intrigue, action, drama... *Bubblegum Crisis* has the lot, and it shot Sonoda to fame in the West as well as the East. He followed his success with *Riding Bean*. Something of a precursor to *Gunsmith Cats*, *Riding Bean* was inspired by Sonoda's love of fast cars and American movies like *French Connection*, *Bullitt*, *The Blues Brothers*, and *The Driver*.

Packed with cool cars and on-edge action, the one-off *Riding Bean* story featured getaway driver Bean Bandit and his partner Rally Vincent engaged in a head-to-head road duel with a gang of evil kidnappers, while all the time being chased by a dogged police detective. Set in Chicago, *Riding Bean* was Sonoda's favourite work and it set the stage for the later *Gunsmith Cats* comics. Again, *Gunsmith Cats* featured Bean Bandit (although only in an occasional side role) and Rally Vincent – but Rally's looks changed considerably (from blond and white and brunette and tawny) and she gained her own sidekick, bomb fanatic MiniMay Hopkins. As *Gunsmith Cats* makes the transition from comics to the animed medium, it seems that Kenichi Sonoda is back with a bang – several, in fact!

SONODA ANIME CHECKLIST

BUBBLEGUM CRISIS Episodes one to eight, available dubbed or subtitled from Anime Projects.
BUBBLEGUM CRASH Episodes one to three, available dubbed from Manga Video in August.
GALL FORCE: EARTH CHAPTER Episodes one to three, available dubbed from Manga Video in October.
GUNSMITH CATS Available dubbed or subtitled from AD Vision UK.
RIDING BEAN Available dubbed or subtitled from Anime Projects.
TEN LITTLE GALL FORCE AND SCRAMBLE WARS Available subtitled from Anime Projects.

One look at this original Sonoda artwork and you can see just how well *Gunsmith Cats'* animators have transferred his designs to the screen.



WIN!!

10 SETS OF GUNSMITH CATS BOOTY!

To celebrate the release of *Gunsmith Cats* and the arrival of AD Vision UK on the scene big time, we've got 10 sets of *Gunsmith Cats* stuff to give away. Each super prize bundle contains the following:

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- **Gunsmith Cats video**
- **Dragon Half video**

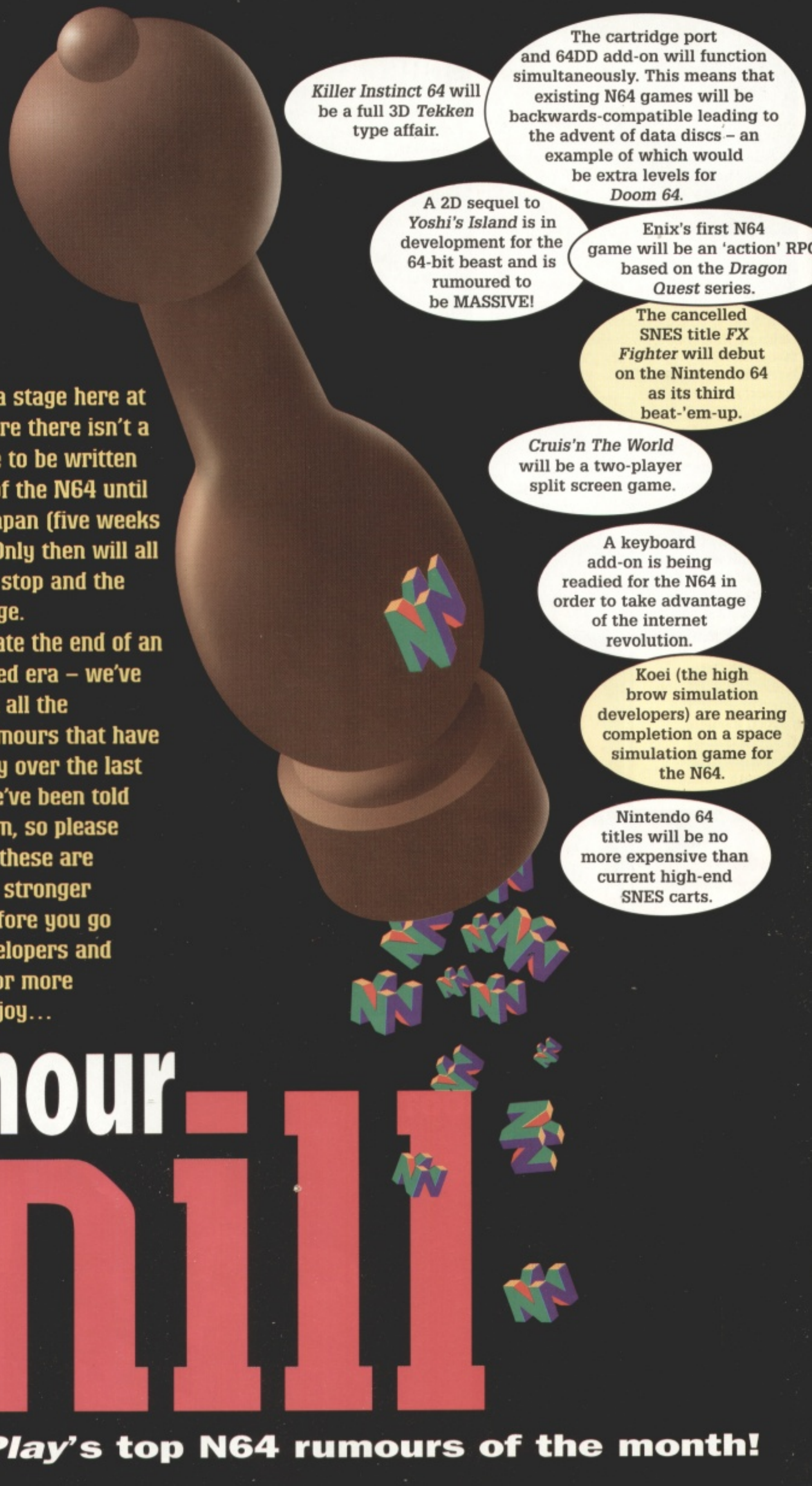
Hours of fun guaranteed... if you win. If you fancy your chances, all you have to do is answer this one simple question: Which of the following did Sonoda believe to be his finest work? Was it a) Runner Bean b) Riding Bean c) Mr Bean or d) Sean Bean? Send your answer along with your name and address to: **Gunsmith Cats Comp, *Super Play*, Future Publishing, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath BA1 2BW.** Entries to arrive no later than June 21st.

Great prizes and a question that's as easy as those on Movies, Games & Videos. What more could you want?

Another of Sonoda's greatest creations – Priss from *Bubblegum Crisis* shows how he handles both sci-fi and contemporary subjects with the same flair.

We've reached a stage here at Super Play where there isn't a great deal more to be written on the subject of the N64 until its release in Japan (five weeks and counting). Only then will all the speculation stop and the real facts emerge.

So, to celebrate the end of an anticipation-filled era – we've decided to print all the Nintendo 64 rumours that have trickled our way over the last few months. We've been told not to print them, so please remember that these are rumours (some stronger than others) before you go phoning up developers and nagging them for more information. Enjoy...



Killer Instinct 64 will be a full 3D *Tekken* type affair.

The cartridge port and 64DD add-on will function simultaneously. This means that existing N64 games will be backwards-compatible leading to the advent of data discs – an example of which would be extra levels for *Doom 64*.

A 2D sequel to *Yoshi's Island* is in development for the 64-bit beast and is rumoured to be MASSIVE!

Enix's first N64 game will be an 'action' RPG based on the *Dragon Quest* series.

The cancelled SNES title *FX Fighter* will debut on the Nintendo 64 as its third beat-'em-up.

Cruis'n The World will be a two-player split screen game.

A keyboard add-on is being readied for the N64 in order to take advantage of the internet revolution.

Koei (the high brow simulation developers) are nearing completion on a space simulation game for the N64.

Nintendo 64 titles will be no more expensive than current high-end SNES carts.

rumour mill

ISSUE 45

JULY 1996

***Super Play*'s top N64 rumours of the month!**

The 64DD will receive an official European release in the summer of '97 – nine months after its Japan launch.

Shadows Of The Empire will be a two-player game.

Shiny Entertainment are nearing completion on an all-new, 3D *Earthworm Jim* title for the N64.

T•HQ are developing *Akira* for the N64.

Top Gun: A New Adventure has been put on hold by Microprose as they wait to discover when exactly the machine will hit the streets and just how much carts will retail for.

An N64 version of *Hexen* is in the works.

Super Mario 64 contains over 150 levels.

Killer Instinct 64 will contain the original coin-op version.

The N64 will come packed with a demo cart much like the CD that's included with the PlayStation.

Waterworld 64 has been cancelled by Ocean after the film's poor performance.

Importers in the UK are planning to sell the Japanese N64 for £700.

As well as *Shadows Of The Empire*, Nintendo have already signed up the exclusive rights to LucasArts' next three *Star Wars* films.

Mission Impossible is one of the first games completed for the N64.

The N64 version of *War Gods* will be radically improved.

Metroid 64 will be the killer app at this year's Shoshinkai show in November.

Shigeru Miyamoto has created a brand new character for games on the N64.

Nintendo purposely showed little of their forthcoming games at last year's Shoshinkai show because they were worried that struggling Sega would clone them.

Rare are currently working on an 'action game' for the 64DD.

Konami will produce the first golf sim for the N64.

A 64-bit version of *Kid Icarus* is 50% complete and due for release before Christmas.

Nintendo expect the N64 to sell-out "within five hours" when the N64's released in Japan.

The N64 *Mortal Kombat* title will be entitled *Mortal Kombat Chronicles*.

Super Mario RPG 64 is in the planning stages as you read.

Namco's first N64 game will be *Dirt Dash* on the 64DD.

Some of the levels in *Super Mario 64* are said to stretch up to one square mile.

KI64 boasts 150,000 texture-mapped polygons running at 60fps.

Turok: Dinosaur Hunter doesn't look very good.

Nintendo Of America are not entirely happy with THE games' decision to continue with the 'You Can't Buy This' ad campaign as it still refers to the N64 as *Ultra*.

Zombies 64 will be played from a *Doom* perspective.

Donkey Kong 64 will be very similar in format to *Super Mario 64*.

As well as the control pad being available in seven different colours early next year, a limited edition N64 will be released in several different colours – including transparent.

Stunt Race 64 will be a split-screen four-player game.

On the title screen of the finished version of *Super Mario 64*, as well as being able to stretch Mario's head, a special button combination will allow the player to stretch a digitised Shigeru Miyamoto's head.

Wave Race 64 contains a hidden level which allows you to play the original *F-Zero*.

DMA's *Unirally 64* will be a four-player affair and boast a *Kirby Bowl*-esque perspective.

The analogue joystick on the controller had to be tweaked slightly as it proved not to be strong enough after repeated play.

Although graphically *FIFA '97* on the N64 will make all previous versions look silly there won't be full commentary due to memory limitations.

Doom 64 features all-new levels, music, enemies and weapons and so is effectively *Doom 3*.

Nintendo are on the verge of signing exclusive rights to the second *Star Trek The Next Generation* movie, *Generations 2*.

Creator is not so much a game as it is a dinosaur sim along the lines of the PC hit, *Dogz* (issue 43 pg 16).

Zelda 64 will feature a *Loaded* perspective that can be rotated through 360°.

After his 2D *Yoshi 64* is completed, Shigeru Miyamoto will begin work on an all new 2D Mario game.

A four-player, tag-team beat-'em-up featuring all your favourite Nintendo characters will be released in time for Christmas to combat Sega's *Sonic Fighters*.

Square will be producing games for the N64, but they won't be RPGs.

The first 100 Nintendo 64s sold in the UK will come packed with a free naked lady – that was a joke!

Kicking off a series of specials on the games you like to play, our first feature delves into the pointy-hatted genre that draws fanaticism and derision in equal measure: roleplaying games.

What do you mean you don't

...know anything about...

RPGs?

It wasn't intentional, you know. *Super Play*'s regular coverage of RPGs was originally a consequence of our brief to cover the Japanese games scene in detail. Over there it's big business, with RPGs outselling all other types of game by a significant margin and SNES sales alone constituting a multi-billion Yen industry. But, as your letters and survey answers show, our introduction to the format has left many of you addicted to the pastime of wandering around Middle Earth with a vorpal blade, making collanders from small orcs and wizards. What is it about RPGs that causes such devotion?

SO, HOW DO YOU PLAY AN RPG?

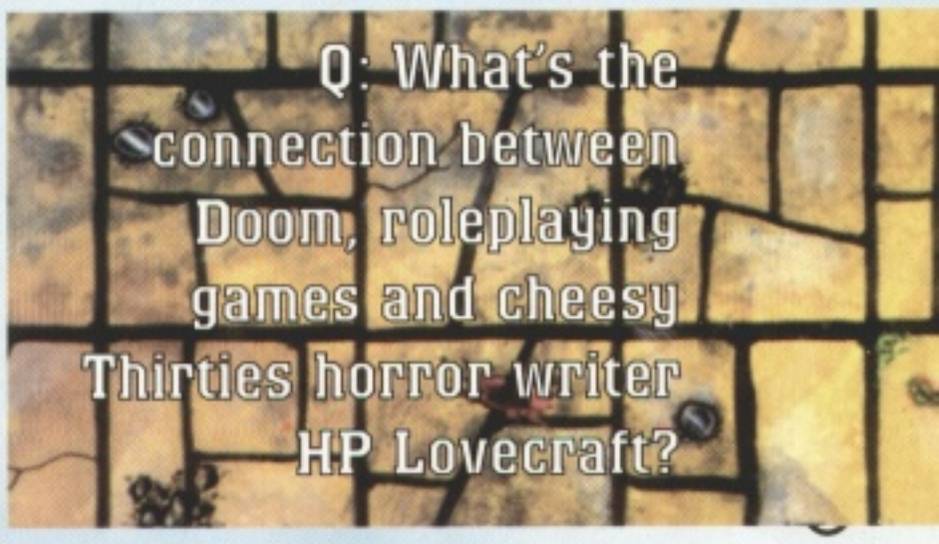
Whereas a quick blast on *Doom* or *Mario Kart* can be immediately rewarding – and I say that with no disrespect for their depth or long-term appeal – RPGs are not designed to provide instant gratification. If you're going to get anything out of them, you need to set aside several hours and allow your brain to be sucked into the storyline or absorbed by the puzzles, simply to get started. Very often the ultimate goals of your party or hero will take days of playing time, and if you don't put in the effort to keep track of names and places then it's easy to lose your way and forget what you're supposed to be doing. Consider this: many *Super Play* readers proudly wrote in to tell us that they'd completed Square's *Final Fantasy III* in 40 hours, rather than the much-touted 70. That's an entire *working week* invested in solving a video game.

It's because of this relative inaccessibility – when compared to other cartridge titles, at least – that console RPGs have often been given short shrift by players, publishers and journalists alike. I'm sure we've all seen reviews in other magazines where the critic has obviously spent no more than half an hour judging an RPG before handing out the uncontroversial 74% verdict, regardless of how good or bad it might be after a little more exploration. Our past attempts to redress the balance have often resulted in *Super Play* being branded 'the RPG mag', when all we've tried to do is judge the games fairly on their own terms. (Not that we aren't a bit mad about them, though – you'll find no less than 12 RPGs in SP42's Top 100).

So roleplaying games, simply for being an acquired taste, once seemed consigned to obscurity with only occasional titles released for the interest of a gaming clique. The situation changed radically, however, with the US release of Square's *Final Fantasy III* in 1994. Even the most careless of reviewers couldn't fail to be awestruck by the graphical and musical sophistication of its opening sequence, and within months we watched as the traditionally sports-dominated best seller lists of the States opened up a little in reflection of the changing tastes of SNES owners.

ACOLYTES, START HERE

You'll see many games described as RPGs (Nintendo UK even tried to pass off *Super Metroid* as an RPG in one bizarre, reactionary 1994 press release) but there



are so many types and flavours of roleplaying that it's rarely a helpful description. To help you out in your search for new carts, we've devised an explanation of the basic sub-genres and playing styles that you'll find in the Super Nintendo's enormous library of titles.

Action RPGs (The A-RPG)

Having decried the attitude of software houses earlier in this feature, our complaints now ring a little hollow because so many A-RPGs are actually damn fine games. The combination of joypad twirling skills, reflexes, reactions, puzzles and storytelling makes for a deeper playing experience than, say, the frantic but two-dimensional appeal of the scrolling beat-'em-up. In its simplest form the A-RPG

A-RPG *Tenchi Souzou* from Quintet and Enix features, arguably, the most controllable character yet.

gives you control of a single protagonist character, who moves according to the D-pad, and attacks when you press a button.

Turn-based RPGS

So-called because that's exactly how any form of physical conflict is resolved. Your hero takes a swing with his sword, then the enemy has a pop, then it's your turn again – and so on, until only one combatant is left standing. It's a fairly unrealistic method of simulating grown men in armour having a go, but from a gameplayer's point of view it can still offer intellectual engagement. How to maximise your inflicted damage in the first round, that is the question...

Menu-Driven RPGS

I've made a distinction from turn-based RPGs here because many games now give you a time limit in which to make your menu choices or icon-led decisions, so it's not strictly true to say they have a turn-based system. If you don't select your options in time, you lose the opportunity to act. Typically, it's *Final Fantasy III* that exploits the format and waives the rules. If

ARE YOU AN RPG HEAD?

For some diehards, roleplaying games are such a way of life that they have to buy anything with the merest whiff of elven thighboots.

Fanaticism

Call yourself an *FF3* fan? Believe me, I've seen some excessive adoration (folk writing in to the Forum to tell me what they named their characters, for instance) but wait till you see the pages and pages of fan fiction. Yes, it's no joke – tired of waiting for the next instalment, some creative pointyhats have been writing their own stories using the worlds and characters from Square games. And posting their efforts on the internet, naturally. The quality is predictably varied, but one correspondent recently offered to compile an anthology for publication.

A revolting prospect, certainly, but I think it gives us an insight into why these games are so popular. When the imaginary world has a distinctive flavour, a peculiar style and an internal consistency, it can become as immersive as Star Trek's Federation or Tolkien's Middle Earth.

Full marks if you guessed that this manga was inspired by the king of console RPGs *Dragon Quest.*

GAME

The Legend of Zelda: A Link To The Past

Nintendo, 8Mbit, SP2 93%, ARPG

What's left to say? This game has already grasped top spot in our All-Time Top 100 Games (*SP42*), and if we've done our job properly then you should already have played this and know exactly what we're talking about.

It's rare to see a video game's design stray so close to perfection. Just when you think you've exhausted all the possibilities and reached a dead end, you find another item or learn a new trick with an old one that opens up whole new areas to explore. You can walk from one side of the map to the other in less than a minute, but every screen turns out to be packed with half a dozen secrets – hidden treasures, magic caves, sliding stones – that reveal themselves gradually over time.

The princess-rescuing plot is, of course, nothing more than a device to propel you through the game, and the emphasis on action can make it feel you're playing an overhead *Mario World*, (um, like that's a criticism?), but this is A-RPGing at its finest.

If you have a Game Boy or Super Game Boy then *Zelda IV* is also a must. Smaller it may be, but those same design sensibilities dazzle enough to shame many 16-bit efforts.

Final Fantasy III

Square Soft, 24Mbit, SP26 95%, Menu-Driven RPG

Can we describe this without using the words 'epic', 'classic' or 'enormous'? Probably not. Square's magnum opus has captivated the minds of millions – literally millions – of players across the world, and even the absence of a PAL release couldn't prevent a British cult

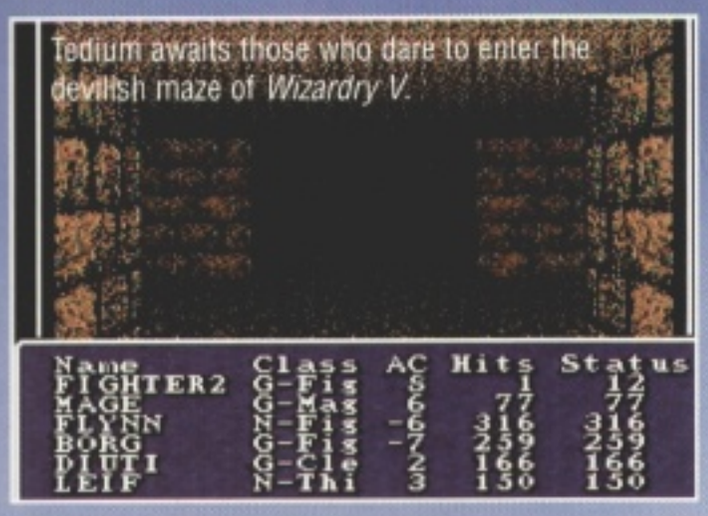
A: Gamesmith and respected RPG-head Sandy M. Petersen. Before joining id Software and co-designing the levels of Doom, Petersen worked for Chaosium Inc. and was responsible for the classic paper-&-dice rolegame Call of Cthulhu (based on Lovecraft's horror mythos).

RPGs?

Sabin's in your party, for example, then you're asked to perform nifty *SFII* pad waggles to pull off his special attacks.

The Dungeon Bash

For many years, the first-person perspective epitomised Western roleplaying fare. *Dungeon Master*, *Bard's Tale* and the *Ultima Underworlds* are classic examples. You control a character or party engaged in the exploration of a dungeon, and a window on the screen shows you what your characters can see. It isn't handled with *Doom*-like smoothness, however: instead, the dungeon is mapped out with graph paper squareness and your '3D' view is generated every time you take a step or turn a corner. Logic and lateral thinking, rather than storytelling, provide the focus of the gameplay. The attraction lies in the open-ended gameflow – besides slaying or avoiding monsters, your brain has to chew over half a dozen traps and puzzles simultaneously until something clicks, thus allowing you to progress to a new unexplored section. There's nothing linear about this style of roleplaying. It's easy to get lost or stuck in a seeming dead end, so patience is essential for this type of game.


Tedium awaits those who dare to enter the devilish maze of *Wizardry V*.
Name Class AC Hits Status
FIGHTER2 G-Fis 5 1 12
MAGE G-Mas 6 77 77
FLYNN N-Fis -6 316 316
BORG G-Fis -7 259 259
DIUTI G-Cle 2 166 166
LEIF N-Thi 3 150 150

With one exception, all first-person RPGs on the SNES are conversions of computer titles. This raises a few problems, not least with saved games: whereas the home computer user could save to disk ad infinitum, battery back-up only gives you one saved game file.

The Strategy RPG (S-RPG)

It's a well known fact (to *Super Play*

E L I S T I N G

following. *FFIII* boasts a huge and sympathetic cast of characters, an epic (damn) storyline that uses the end of the world as an interlude, orchestral arrangements squeezed miraculously from a sound chip and the sort of graphics that make jaws hit floors.

It's the sort of game that inspires fanaticism. You wouldn't believe the number of complaints sent in that *FFIII* was 'only' number 6 in our All-Time Top 100. Hopefully this shift to second place will appease you (and it's the first menu-driven affair if ARPGs aren't your bag).

Secret of Mana

Square Soft, 16Mbit, SP15 94% ARPG

I was suspicious after almost four years, but no: *Mana* still looks and sounds as delicious as ever. How delicious? Well, Jonathan Davies smiled, and sighed. It's true.

The linearity is reasonably severe, but there's just enough going on to maintain the happy illusion of a world existing beyond your current location. We might doubt if the three-player multi-tap option has ever seen much use, and if you look back on it now it's easy to be cynical about the depth of the characterisation, but action RPGs with a story to tell have rarely been so well crafted. A beautiful game.

Final Fantasy II

Square Soft, 8Mbit, RPG 90%, Menu-Driven RPG

Time hasn't been kind to its graphics, but nothing can obscure the tragi-heroic narrative of this *Star Wars*-inspired fantasy. Square's musical talents are already evident, and if you're a storygamer then you should hunt it down with all due haste.

Chrono Trigger

Square Soft, 32Mbit, SP37 90%, Menu-driven

Time travel, fantasy, outstanding graphics, Akira '*Dragonball Z*' Toriyama chara designs – need we say more? Its lightweight plotting and characterisation might have disappointed those who were expecting another improvement on *Final Fantasy*, but pit it against any other RPG and *Chrono Trigger* wins smiling, slipping its katana back into the sheath without breaking a sweat.

Shadowrun

Data East, 8Mbits, SP10 85%, ARPG

Look out, it's an orc with a shotgun! Based on a popular paper-&dice roleplaying game from FASA Corp (the people behind *BattleTech*), the unique flavour of this darkly futuristic romp demands that you track it down. Isometric environments, guns, death, magic, and an all-too-rare investment of thought in the opening plot. A sequel, promised in the end credits, never materialised.

Earthbound

Nintendo, 24Mbit, SP35 88%, Turn-based

Something odd is going down in small-town America, and only a bunch of inquisitive kids can save the day. This bizarro Japanese pastiche of B-movie culture is quite simply MAD with a capital moo, and seems to engender love or hate reactions. We loved it.

The battle system may be cruddy but the 8-bit graphics fit the innocent atmosphere, and it's like a breath of fresh air after so many hackneyed sword-&-sorcery efforts. Recommended for experienced rolegamers, who will appreciate the self-referential humour and testing combat.

Breath of Fire 2

Capcom, 20Mbit, SP41 81%, Turn-based

Possibly the best translated series you can obtain after *Final Fantasy*, in my opinion. Plotwise it's occasionally mundane, and the sub-games are pump. But the chance to populate your own little RPG village as the game progresses is a neat touch, and the characters are more sympathetic than than before. It is a shame about the inept translation, though.

Breath of Fire

Capcom 16Mbit, SP24 80%, Turn-based RPG

I don't think there's much between the two *BOF* games – they're both splendidly huge RPGs, set in the same fantasy world, with hidden bits aplenty – but this earlier game has a little more charm than its younger sibling. So, er, get them both.

Soul Blazer

Enix, 8Mbit, SP2 89% ARPG

Initial impressions suggest this is a juvenile game (and that 'telex print-out' method of displaying dialogue will drive you up the bloody wall) but persevere and you'll discover its ingenious charm. By defeating demons in the underworld, you release people and objects on the surface: so, as one environment shrinks, another opens itself up for exploration above. What happened to game design of this calibre?

Illusion of Time

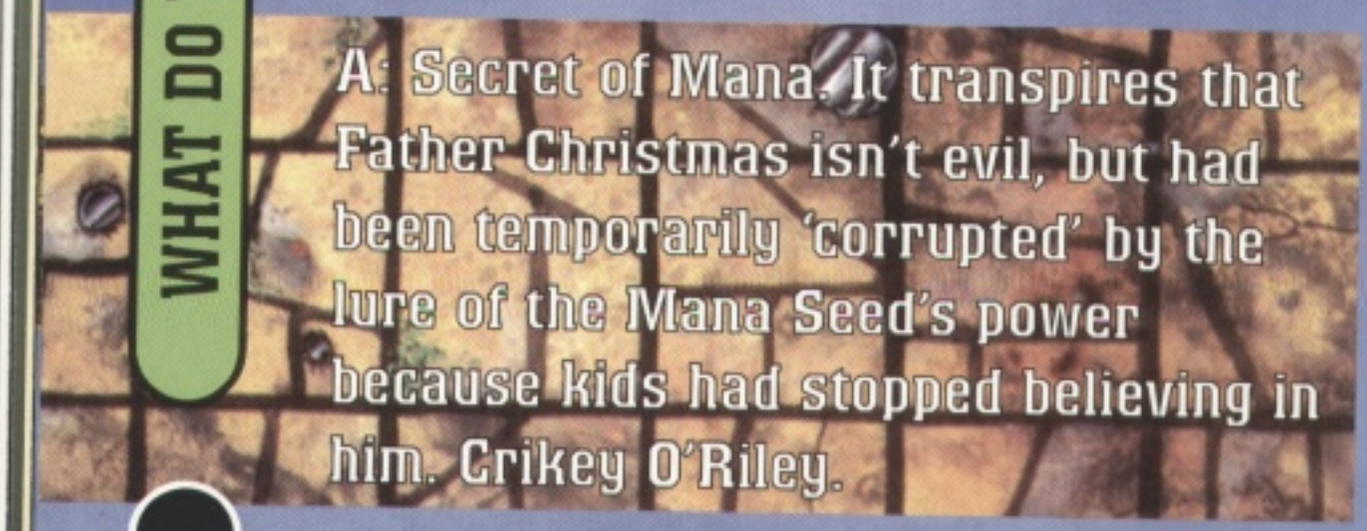
Nintendo UK. (US:Enix, named Illusion of Gaia) 16Mbit, SP26 88%, ARPG

I didn't find this semi-sequel to *Soul Blazer* as engaging as other members of the *Splay* team, but it boasts some undeniably steadfast sword action. The bosses can be incredibly tough to beat (gah, those two vampires) so tread with caution if your pad skills are a bit shaky.

Front Mission

Square Soft, Japan, 24 Mbits, SP31 88%, SRPG

Moody characters in mobile suits makes for an interesting little wargame with more


A: Secret of Mana. It transpires that Father Christmas isn't evil, but had been temporarily 'corrupted' by the lure of the Mana Seed's power because kids had stopped believing in him. Crikey O'Riley.

readers, at least) that Japanese designers love their characters. Everything they create, from driving games to *Tetris* puzzles, has to include a cast of identifiable heroes and hissable villains. Indeed, they probably couldn't bear to release a version of Noughts And Crosses without a plot in which hyper-powered schoolgirl Lqvely Zero must thwart the grid-dominating plans of the evil Crux Intersector.

Consequently, many SNES titles exhibit RPG-like sequences that may have little or no relation to the actual game. Efforts like *Ogre Battle*, *Front Mission* and *Bahamut Lagoon* are really skirmish wargames with a simple storyline to propel you from one level to the next, but the high fantasy/SF element means they usually appeal to the same gamers who enjoy RPGs. Genuine strategy RPGs – where the emphasis is on roleplaying, but with a more strategic combat system than usual – have appeared on the Super Famicom: unfortunately, translations have been predictably thin on the ground.

THESE RPGS, THEN – WHERE ARE THEY?

There's a rather unpleasant prejudice I'd like to expose, and it necessitates some honest language. We've said, many times, that software publishers aren't keen to release RPGs over here. Even when a game has been developed in Japan, translated in the States, demonstrated solid sales in both markets, and could be picked up for European release with a simple licensing deal, the softies look upon this genre with the disdain of a vegan at a hog roast. And if they do finally decide to dip a toe in the water with a roleplaying title, it's almost inevitably of the arcade action variety. Why? Well, it's harder to make a buck from 'cult' interests in the European market, true, but let's just admit it. Their assumption is that, because you play games on a console rather than a computer, you're probably a bit of a thickie.

Insulting, isn't it? And yet that's the attitude we've encountered time and again when dealing with the various factions of the industry. Strategy games and wargames have suffered similarly in the availability stakes, because they also make strong demands of the gameplaying habits of console owners. If you're a software publisher then it makes far more sense to play safe with a licensed platformer, overhyped robot beat-'em-up or a simulation of a popular sport. And to paraphrase Samuel Goldwyn, no-one ever lost money by underestimating the intelligence of the general public.

... THEY ARE A'CHANGIN'...

Aha. If I've moved onto a downbeat note, it's purely for dramatic effect. You see, I'm about to reveal that things are genuinely looking up for fans of RPGs. The demographic has shifted: it's no longer safe to assume that a console owner will be of a particular age, or income, and the software houses are starting to notice that video gamers have developed more sophisticated tastes over the past few years.

GLOSSARY

Non-Player Character (NPC)
Anybody you can't control in the game, basically. Innkeepers, peasants, security guards and the plebs you meet on your quest may sometimes help you or impart some vital information, but then they have served their purpose.

Hit Points (HP)
The amount of health your character possesses – the idea being that you can take so many wounds until, reduced to zero HP, you die. Like energy bars, it doesn't relate to real life too closely but works a treat in a videogame.

Experience Points (EXP)
If you make a habit of killing things then you're bound to get better at it, so many games keep track of your victories in the form of an experience point tally. The corresponding 'level' of your experience determines the bonuses you get in battle.

Skirmish
A small-scale battle. Traditional wargames are about the manipulation of 'units', where one soldier on the tabletop battlefield can represent 10,000 blood-hungry warriors. In a skirmish game, the unit at your command represents just one soldier or monster on a 1:1 ratio. It was the desire for skirmish fantasy wargames that prompted Dave Arneson and E. Gary Gygax to invent Chainmail, from which Dungeons and Dragons was spawned.

strategy and shopping than actual roleplay. Once you've sussed the system it's all a little bit too easy, but it's hard to express the pleasure of a direct strike with a Ceres missile.

Super Mario RPG

Nintendo, Jap/US, 32Mbit SP44 81%, turn-based

Another entry level game, designed for the younger player, although the sheer lunacy of the storyline gives it a broader appeal. We kept playing purely to spot the next Nintendo 'in-joke'.

Ogre Battle

Enix, US, 12Mbit, SP34 80%, SRPG

When I reviewed this I was revelling in the chance to play an evil conqueror in a Nintendo game, and thus never noticed how impossibly difficult it is to win as the good guy.

Wargame aficionados will spot the flaws straight off – no routs or morale ratings, the impossibility of sieges – but I can still lose a weekend in *Ogre Battle*. Please, somebody, translate Tactics Ogre.

Paladin's Quest

Enix, US, 8Mbits, SP16 62%, icon-based

A cliched but agreeable romp about teen apprentice wizards with odd bits stuck to their faces. Trying to save the world from an ancient evil, obviously. The naff graphics lend it a distinctive flavour nevertheless, and I don't know what I was up to with that score. Definitely worth a dabble, in retrospect.

Lufia

Taito, US, 12Mbit, SP18 79%, turn-based

You could criticise many other games for the repetitive formula of Dungeon/Boss/Treasure, true, but *Lufia* lacks the big dramatic scenes and memorable events that might have disguised its linearity. Add reams of inconsequential dialogue, a touch of saccharine romance, and you'll understand why we're confused by so many players loving it. Try it and see, I guess.

FF Mystic Quest

Nintendo UK/Square US, 4Mbits, SP3 79%, turn-based

Looking rather dated, this small but tidy quest is really an introduction to the genre for beginners. It's so cheap you might like to check it out for the sake of completism.

Secret of Evermore

Square Soft USA, 24Mbit, SP39 81%, ARPG

Everything you imagined an American-developed *Mana* clone would be. Sadly. But they had the sense to borrow decent sound and graphics routines from their Japanese counterparts, so this UK release is still worth a portion of your time.

Dungeon Master

JVC, US/UK, SP12, 88%, icon-based, dungeon bash

In its day, this classic first-person dungeon puzzler inspired more imitators than *Doom*.

...RPGs?

POLYHEDRAL VICE

This is where it all began. Paper-&-dice roleplaying games, moderated by a human referee, have been ruthlessly plundered for ideas and conventions by computer game designers from the very start. If you've played a console RPG, you can practically guarantee that some aspect of it has been borrowed from a rulebook or game session.

Sadly, many computer RPGs continue to demonstrate an obsession with the game systems of the late 70s. Orcs, hit points and fireball spells are still the order of the day, and it was with some surprise that we recently heard Square announce their 'Action Point Battle' system as if it was somehow revolutionary. Even the clumsy concept of alignment class has only just filtered through to *Seiken Densetsu 3*...

Confused? You needn't be. The concept of 'traditional' roleplaying is deceptively simple. The players create their own alter-egos within a fictional world: for example, you might be a hired assassin with a team of mercenaries in a futuristic Los Angeles. The referee describes the situation in which you find yourselves – perhaps cornered in an downtown bar by Yakuza hitmen – and the participants must then play out the scenario by explaining what their characters intend to do. A rule system is consulted to moderate events (perhaps you have a 70% chance of slipping under the table before you're noticed), and that's where the funny dice come in. You don't need to be a great actor or wargame expert to join in, and it's a highly sociable form of fantasy gaming. Let's face it, anything that involves sitting round a table with your best mates and a stack of tinnies can't be that sad.

For more information you might like to check out another Future Publishing magazine called *arcane*, which covers all systems and styles of roleplaying. I know that sounds like a blatant plug – and it is – but I rate *arcane* very highly, so I hope you'll indulge me this once.

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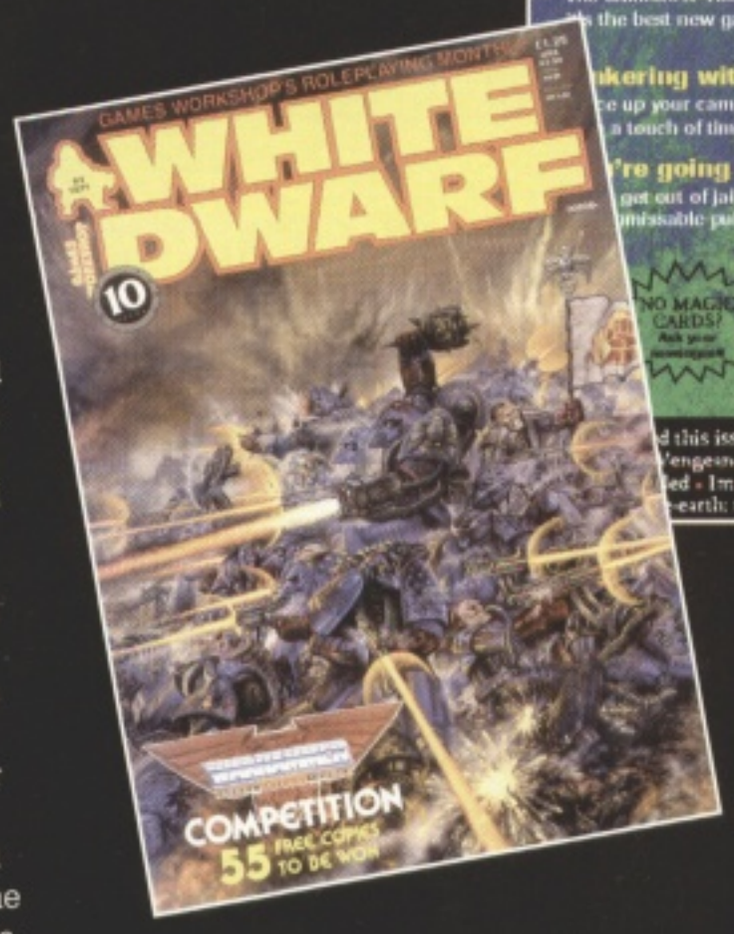


We can especially recommend *arcane* no. 5, for Paul Mason's report on the Japanese roleplaying otaku.

It's not entirely comfortable on the SNES, and even a DSP chip hasn't eliminated the slowdown, but if you can put up with that – and the dodgy controls – then take a look at how roleplaying games 'used to be'.

Ultima VI, the False Prophet

FCI, US, 12Mbits, SP22 45%, turn-based

Richard Garriot's splendid Ultima games must rank as the most popular RPG series on the PC, and these later episodes are stylistically similar to traditional Japanese fare in their exploitation of characters and dialogue. Unfortunately, Pony Canyon's inept SNES conversion must rank as one of the worst ever. If you're looking for a really tough adventure with a huge sprawling environment and non-linear exploration then go ahead, but be warned: the eye-straining graphics and parpy music actually made me feel physically sick. What a shame. Pony Canyon also converted *Ultima VII, The Black Gate*, but included an action-based combat system that's far too easy to win.

Robotrek

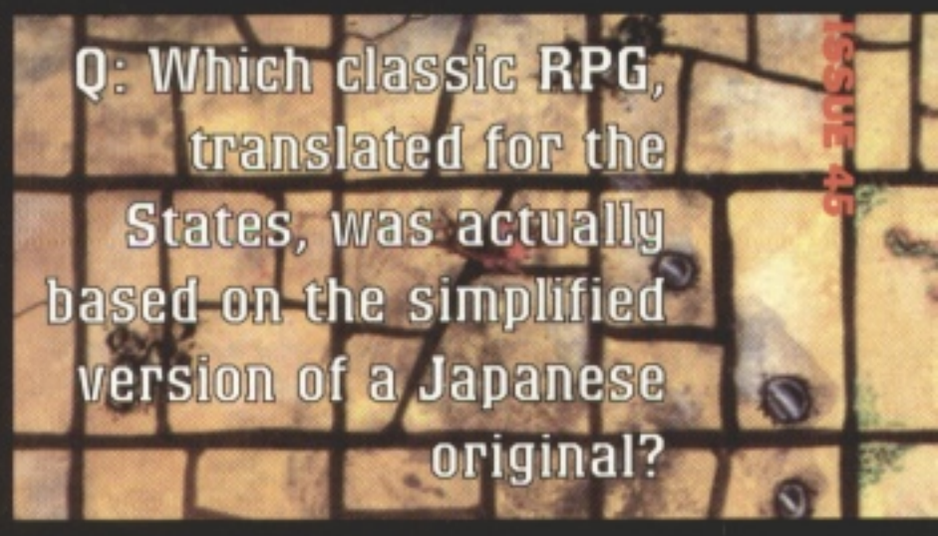
Enix US, SP31 72%, turn-based

A small spark of originality from Enix in that your character doesn't actually fight: instead, he must create and program robots to do things for him. There's much emphasis on planning and strategy – you can tinker with practically everything – and I suspect this was under-rated at the time, although the despicably poor translation could put you off.

Addams Family Values

Ocean, UK, 12Mbit, SP31 75% ARPG

Despite its cleverness, *AFV* has annoyed you all on one sticking point. No matter how many *Zelda*-style puzzles you solve or weapons you collect, Fester is not a man of action. That's no small problem for an action RPG, and right up to the end of the game you find yourself unable to walk around without being battered senseless by bits of shrubbery. Frustrating.


Q: Which classic RPG, translated for the States, was actually based on the simplified version of a Japanese original?
ISSUE 45

What do you mean you don't know anything about...

7th Saga

Enix, US, 12Mbits, SP14 69%, turn-based

The battles are tough, you can play from a choice of character classes (warning: magic-users die fast), but the lack of both puzzles and decent plottage gives it a plodding feel.

No, the most memorable thing about *7S* is an innovative menu interface that uses just the D-pad and the L button, so you can play with one hand. What you do with the other hand is not a subject we wish to ponder.

Brain Lord

Enix, US, 16Mbit, SP25 81%, ARPG

That score's way too high for such an average action puzzler (my fault, sorry) but I was switched into brainless mode, and still found it amusing. The use of 'fairy' accomplices to provide your character with extra powers doesn't work as well as it did in *Soul Blazer* and it takes a bit of a nosedive towards the end.

Eye of the Beholder

Capcom, US, SP21 52%, icon-based, dungeon bash

Dungeon Bash. Terrible conversion of a good old D&D-derived computer RPG, hence half-marks. The unresponsive controls and ludicrous buffering make it hard to co-ordinate a battle, meaning that you often die unfairly. Tough puzzles, though, and you'll need to map it out yourself.

Young Merlin

Virgin, US/UK, 16Mbits, SP16 77%, ARPG

Strictly speaking this isn't an RPG but an 'adventure game' in the CodeMasters *Dizzy* mould. Explore, find objects and use them to solve puzzles, thus opening up new places to explore. You'll need the patience of a saint to get through its action sections: I gave up in tedium on the first minecart ride.

Dragon View

Kemco, US, SP35 68%, ARPG

A *Drakkhen* sequel, surprisingly, but significantly more fun. The 3D outside view is as poor as ever but the side-on hack and slash combat is exactly what's needed to liven things up.

Alcahest

Square of Japan, 12Mbit, SP18 69%, ARPG

Don't be fooled by the fact that it was published by Square. Developed by Hal Laboratories, this is little more than an overhead slash-&-shoot-'em-up with a fantasy flavour. Unexceptional.

Lagoon

Kemco Jap/US/UK, SP12 56% ARPG

Typically, the *Lagoon* player spends hours wandering around big bland caves and badly drawn-towns before encountering a mega-tough boss. And dying, quickly. A few fun moments can't hope to outweigh the long periods of dullness.

Brandish

Koei, US, 16Mbit, SP37 53% ARPG

Koei's developers have some odd ideas about game design, and they lack the ability to program the SNES in an attractive fashion. Nevertheless, I suspect the raw monster-bashing (viewed from overhead) may find an appreciative hardcore audience.

Wizardy V

Capcom, US, 8 Mbit, SP21 39%, turn based, dungeon bash

Want a game tip? Whenever a character dies in *Wiz V*, hit Reset to avoid having their demise recorded automatically on your BB RAM. Without this tip I found *Wizardry V* almost unplayable, and marked it accordingly, but I made a fair way into it recently and what do you know? It's still a bit smelly. It has its fans, though.

Y's III

Tonkin House, Jap/US, SPG 72%, ARPG

The cart's practically untraceable nowadays, but don't let that worry you. Adol's adventures are witnessed side-on, like a platformer, and it hasn't aged well. We suspect the *Ys* series has a reputation it doesn't deserve.

Might & Magic II

Elite, US/UK, SP13 43%, turn-based, dungeon bash

Inexcusibly horrible graphics (the 'towns' look like open-top dungeons) and grating music, and the puzzles tend to be of the 'take this item to that person to get the key' variety. The playing areas are so enormous that it will take you many weeks to solve, although it's very easy to lose, irretrievably, a character you've spent days building up.

Arcana

HAL, JAP/US, SP1, 65%, turn-based, Dungeon Bash

Talk about two-dimensional characters – everybody in this game is a playing card. No, I never understood either, but maybe it ties in with some obscure Japanese CCG. You'll find no puzzles here, just mazes and monsters, so even the hardest of the hardcore will find it dulls quickly.

AVOID THESE!

Drakkhen

Infogrames UK / Kemco US, 8Mbits, SP4 64%, turn-based

Back in 1991 the 3D exterior graphics were original, if not actually pleasant, but they didn't alleviate the tedium of your quest. A dodgy combat system drives the final nail into *Drakkhen*'s cheap pine resting box.

Lord of the Rings

Interplay, US/UK, 16Mbit, SP29 25%, ARPG

Sure, you loved the book, huh? Yes, you're that sort of person. So don't sully your fond and overgenerous memory of it with this dismal collection of dreary brown mazes in which microscopic hobbit sprites must hit even smaller snake/wolf/bat sprites. The game is subtitled 'Part 1' and I'll wager good money that, like the doomed Ralph Bakshi animated movie, you'll never see a Part 2.

King Arthur & the Knights of Justice

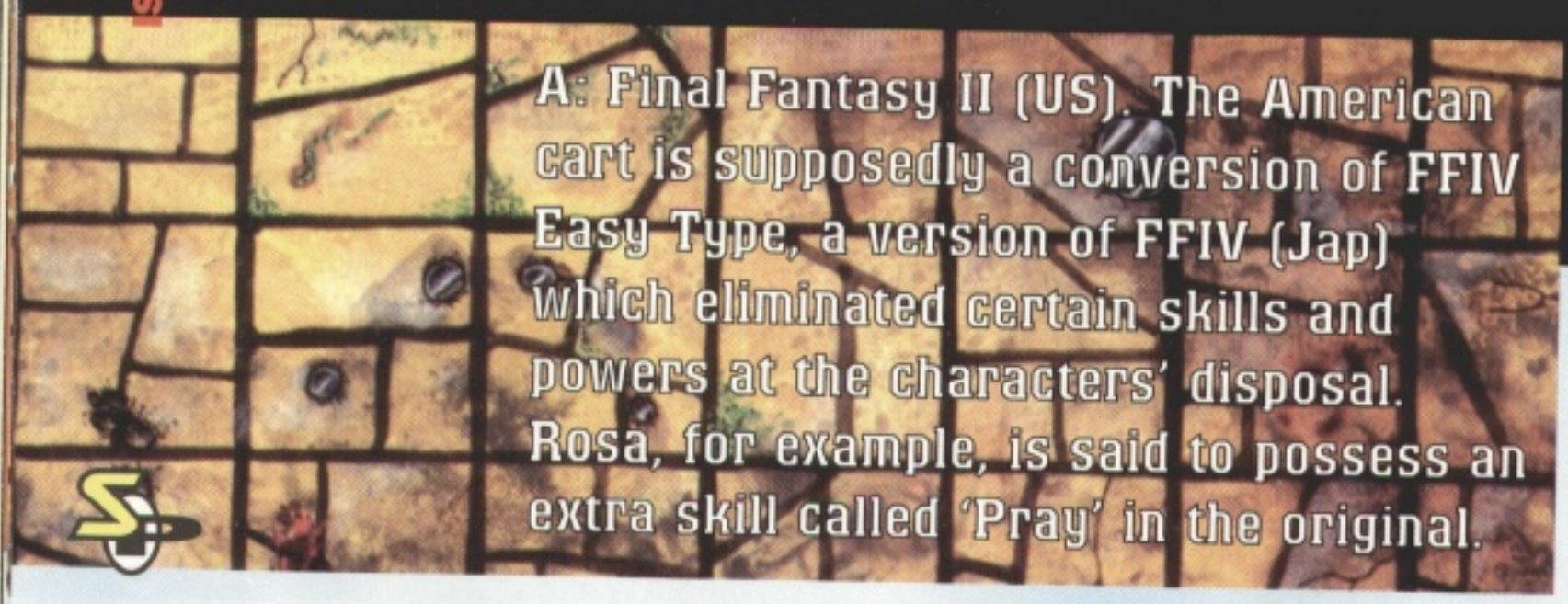
(not reviewed, officially)

Enix's darkest hour. Based on a brainless Saturday morning cartoon about a football team warped back to Camelot, where they gain special shields and weapons that look suspiciously easy to make into plastic merchandise.

Secret of the Stars

Tecmo, US, 12Mbit, SP44 43%, turn-based

Worryingly, a small logo on the cartridge warns of a Tecmo 'RPG series'. NO! The 8-bit game design would have been an embarrassment five years ago, but to see it released now is like seeing a Robin Reliant roll on to the grid at Santa Pod. Over-rated at 43%.


A: Final Fantasy II (US). The American cart is supposedly a conversion of FFIV Easy Type, a version of FFIV (Jap) which eliminated certain skills and powers at the characters' disposal. Rosa, for example, is said to possess an extra skill called 'Pray' in the original.

...RPGs?

THE FUTURE OF RPGS?

What makes a good RPG? It might sound like Daydreaming for the Gamefreak's column rather than hard work, but Japanese designers often get together for conferences and seminars on the evolution of video games. Roleplaying is always high on the agenda, and way back in *SP7* we reported on one meeting which predicted the proliferation of automated fight sequences (the Auto-Battle option). Consequently, we thought we'd throw in our own small suggestions for the future of the genre. Your own thoughts are, as ever, welcome.

Interactivity

Don't you just hate walking into an armour shop and not being able to buy that polished breastplate on the shelf behind the counter? And haven't you hammered buttons with your character facing a desk or computer terminal in the vague hope it might actually do something? If you can see it in the gameworld, you ought to be able to use it (or at least be told why you can't). Candles, wardrobes, vidphones, pot plants, portcullises – if these become real objects that you can manipulate to some degree, not just attractive background graphics, then the gameworld is more involving. Think of the opening section of *Zelda III*, where you can avoid fighting elite blue guards by creeping up behind and knocking them into the chasm below with a well-thrown jar. We want improvised weaponry and bar-room brawls, chandeliers to swing from and passing hovercars to hijack in an emergency. Well, wouldn't you?

Attributes

In *SP7* prominent designers discussed the possibility of a 'Reputation' attribute, suggesting that a known hero ought to get a lot more help from the common people than is generally the case. Revisiting locations after building your reputation might reveal new information or items but it would also be difficult to move around without village spies tipping off your enemy and setting up ambushes on the road. You could then choose whether to travel incognito, or to take advantage of your renown.

In a similar vein, further character attributes could have some bearing on the development of the plot. With whom have you been seen to associate? How much money do you owe Jabba the Hut? What's your criminal record – fugitive or pillar of the community? If you belong to the Clan of the Golden Llama, what's your current standing (at this part of the story) with an initiate of the Imperial Dragon Clan? What if your experience points and accumulated wealth also dictated your social position, and thus affected NPC reactions? All of these factors could influence the storyline to different degrees, even disguising a fairly linear plot as you concentrate on creating the character you want to be.

Quality Scripting

If software houses are prepared to invest millions in graphics tools, shouldn't we demand that they employ decent writers too? You can buy accomplished novelists for a couple of grand and a few beers. Some of them are even capable of witty, engaging dialogue.

Sophisticated Systems

Unfortunately, too many computer and console titles still resemble a late 70s version of TSR's Dungeons & Dragons (the latest Square RPG talks of its 'Action Point Battle' system as if it was somehow revolutionary to do away with combat and movement turns. Excuse me? And they've only just implemented a form of alignment in *Seiken Densetsu 3*...) We don't believe that computerised roleplaying can ever recreate the experience of face-to-face gaming, nor should it try, but it would be great to see them borrow a few tricks on the design side. Imagine creating your character with a points system,

Plots

Much as we love the fantasy genre, there's been little innovation in its video game manifestations. Most notably, we haven't really progressed beyond the struggle of light versus darkness and good against evil. Be great to shove a few shades of grey in there, no? Make people think a little? In comparison to console RPGs, Michael Moorcock's *Elric* novels look positively avant-garde. And why not exploit other literary forms – more conceptual science fiction scenarios, perhaps alternative timelines, or historical murder mysteries with a supernatural edge? *Call of Cthulhu*, anybody? *The Thousand And One Nights*? We're not asking for *Much Ado About Nothing – The RPG*. It wouldn't work. Low Culture is infinitely more fun to play. But we haven't even begun to exploit it.

Finally...

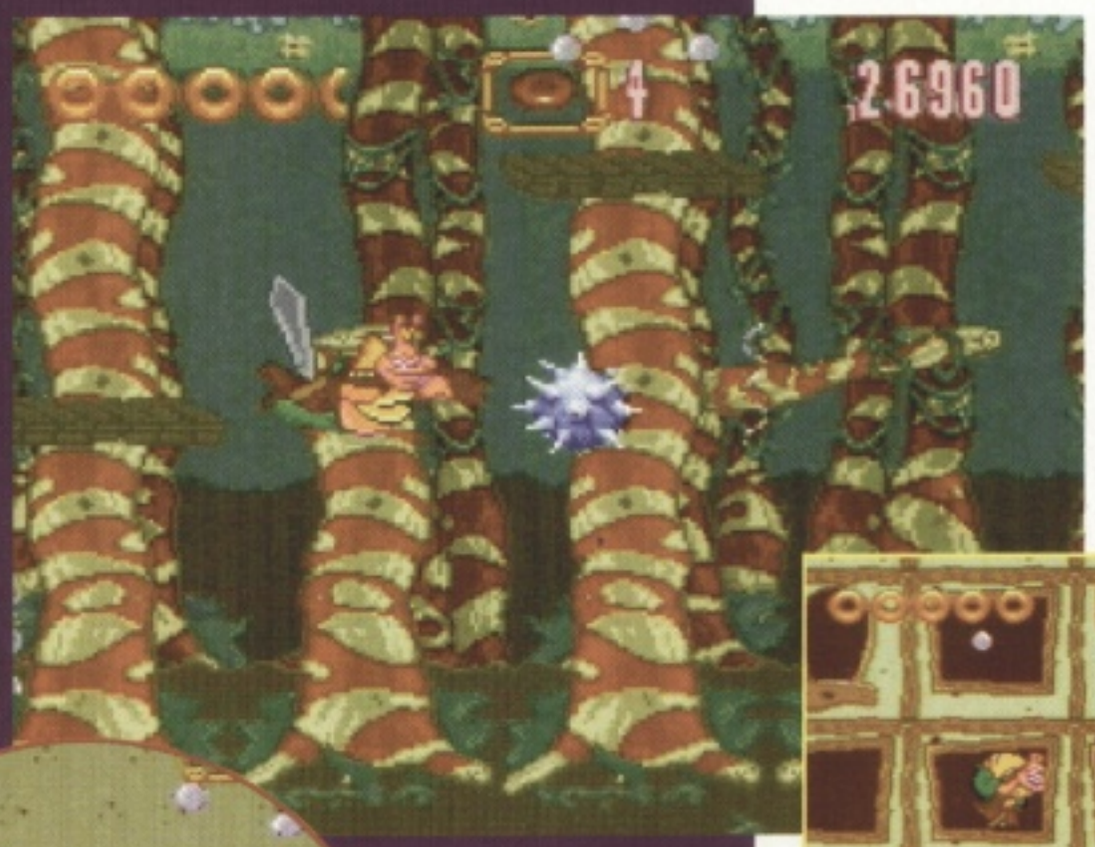
And I know it's been said before, but please, please, please –

NO MORE FLYING ISLANDS.

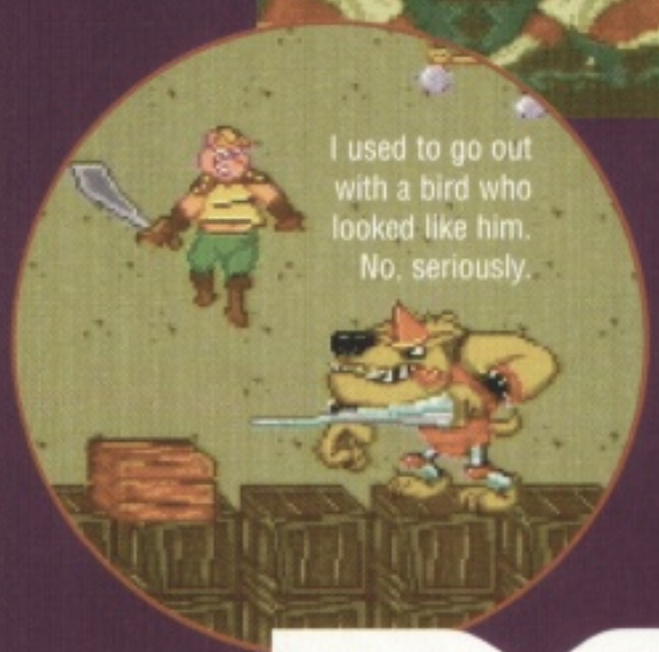
We've never quite grasped the Japanese fixation with Laputan gravity defiance, but it's just not special any more.

UK Release

Game: Power Piggs of the Dark Age
Publisher: Titus
Developer: Radical Entertainment
Price: £39.99
Release: Out now
Players: 1 or 2
Cart ROM: 8 Mbit



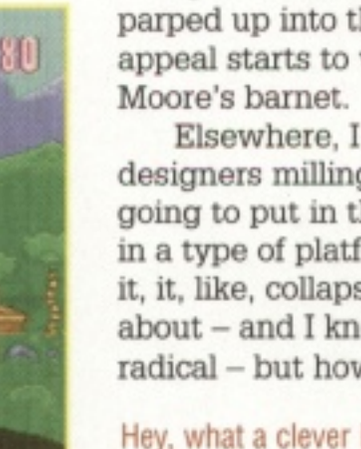
A swipe of the comedy farting sword should see this off.



Hey, what a clever bit of programming. Look, he's, like, sort of partially obscured by the scenery.

Our Gallic cousins have contributed relatively few worthwhile titles to the world of videogaming. Go on, how many decent French games can you name off the top of your head? There's obviously *Another World* (aka *Out Of This World*), one of the true original platformers of recent years, and its follow-up, *Flashback*. But beyond those two – and perhaps a couple of admittedly decent PC games which, paradoxically, sold about five copies each – there's remarkably little of note. And, if the average game produced in escargot-sucking land is anything like *Power Piggs*, it's easy to see why they're so easily forgotten.

When you play a game like this, the enjoyment you get out of it should not simply be derived from overcoming the challenge that's put in front of you, it should also be in getting to see what's on the next level, what the graphics are like and what new gameplay techniques are going to be introduced. In *Piggs*' case, you start not giving a toss about what's round the next corner depressingly rapidly. You'll still be coming up against the same nasties on the sixth level as you did the first, and the backgrounds are of the sort of flat, bland, repetitious variety that even bad '50s cartoon-makers would turn their noses up at.



It's also tricky for all the wrong reasons. Leaps Of Faith™ play a significant part in the proceedings, as do enemies that career onto the screen giving you little chance of retaliation before losing energy. And what's this wind chute idea all about? When I first came across one I thought, yeah, that's a nice little touch. I wasn't expecting it to form such an integral part of the whole game, though, and believe me, once you've been parped up into the air about 50 times, the appeal starts to wear thinner than Bobby Moore's barnet.

Elsewhere, I can almost hear *Piggs*' designers milling over what they were going to put in the game. 'I know, let's put in a type of platform where, if you jump on it, it, like, collapses'. 'Hey, yeah... and how about – and I know this might sound a bit radical – but how about, say, platforms in

"So, Alison," I said, "I don't suppose you need anything reviewing this ish, do you?" Damn my helpful nature.

POWER PIG
OF THE DARK AGE

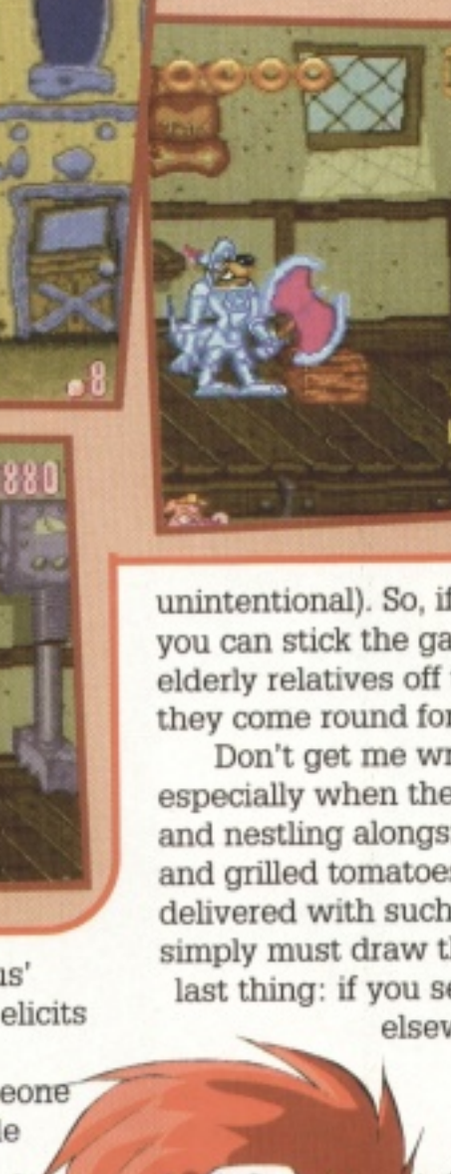
A LOT OF HOT AIR

The *Power Piggs*' world is littered with dozens and dozens of holes from which shafts of air are continually blown. Jump into one and you immediately assume a skydiving position, still able to use your sword and throw doughnuts, but severely hampered mobility-wise. No-one I've spoken to has any idea as to either the origin or purpose of these blow-holes, but then no-one knows why it features cross-dressing wolves, either...

Those squiggly bits are air.

POWER PIGGS

Titus

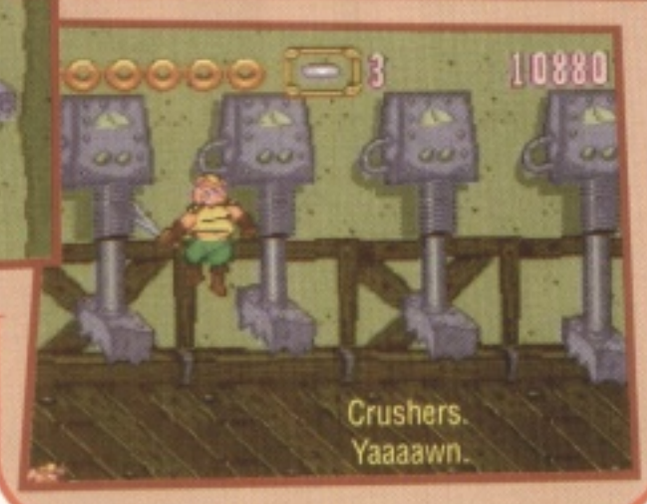


GRAPHICS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
59%	60%	41%
GAMELIFE	OVERALL SCORE:	42%
56%		

VERDICT: Dislikeable characters, ill-conceived gameplay and tawdry graphics add up to a – yeah, sorry – swine of a game.

OH DEAR

Come with me, SNES-sters, as we look at how *not* to design a videogame. *Power Piggs* has lots of fundamental failings, and these are just a selection.



the form of conveyor belts.' 'Yeah! Cool!' Well, okay, chaps, these things would be fine were it not for the fact that they appeared in *Manic Miner* 13 years ago and have had just about every drop of value brutally wrung out of them by every other platformer since. Honestly, it's like *Yoshi's Island* never even happened.

The only real variety is provided by the boss characters, which serve their purpose quite convincingly. Not as convincingly as those in Titus' previous platformer, *Prehistorik Man* (which, while not fit to wipe *Mario*'s boots, is a markedly superior game), mind, but they serve as adequate respites from the undiluted tedium elsewhere.

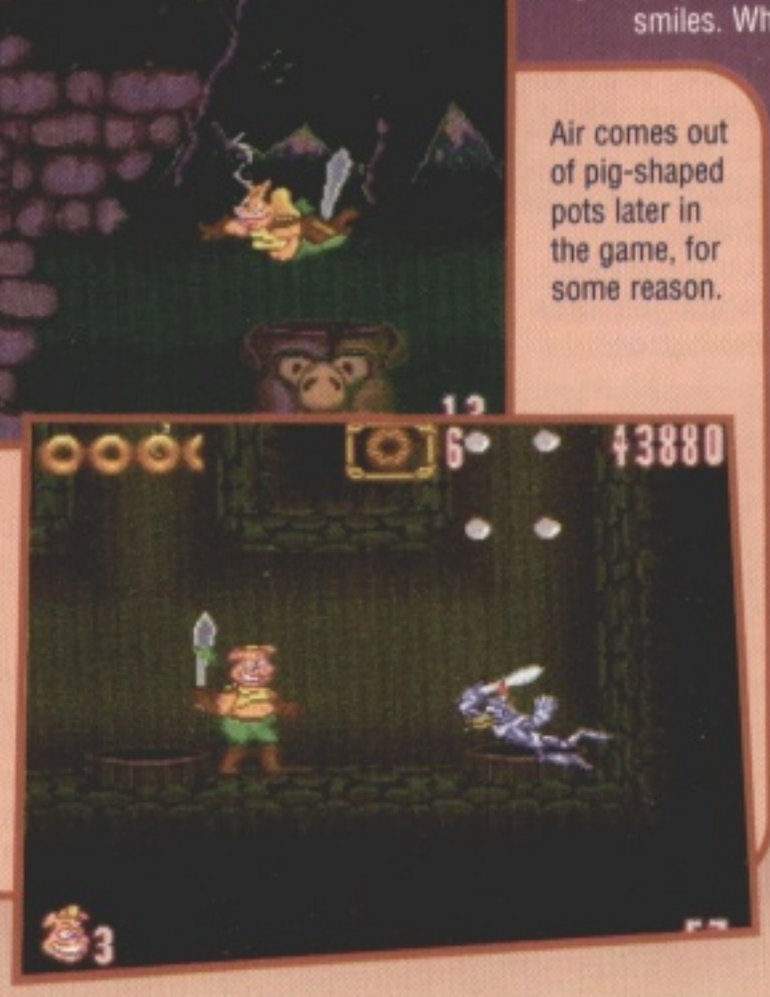
In keeping with the game's coarse theme, *Piggs*' soundtrack features several 'humorous' effects: Bruno's 'Butt Slam' attack elicits a remarkably accurate reproduction of someone breaking wind, while simple sword swipes are accompanied by one of three pitches of what sounds like retching (although I suspect the similarity is unintentional). So, if nothing else, at least you can stick the game on and put your elderly relatives off their Digestives when they come round for tea.

Don't get me wrong – I like pigs, especially when they're cut up into little bits and nestling alongside eggs, mushrooms and grilled tomatoes. But when they're delivered with such shoddiness as this I simply must draw the line. (Oh, and one last thing: if you see *Piggs* reviewed elsewhere and given a score above 50% you'll know they're telling you out-and-out porkies. As usual.)

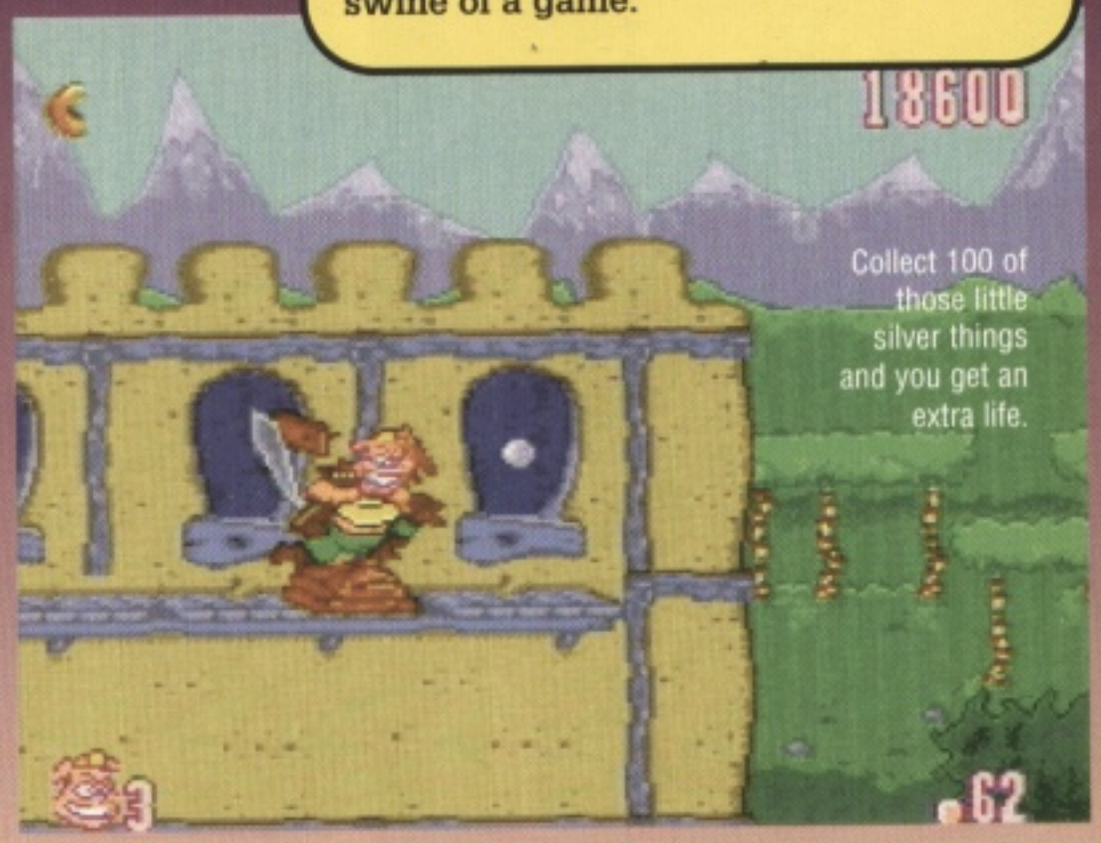
● **Tony Mott**

The great thing about Bruno the pig is that no matter how boring the gameplay around him gets, he always smiles. What a misguided fellow.

Air comes out of pig-shaped pots later in the game, for some reason.



You even get airholes in the underground bits. Thrilling, huh?



Japanese Release

Game: Magical Drop
Publisher: Data East Ltd
Developer: Russ Ltd
Price: Check with importer
Release: Out now
Players: 1 or 2
Cart ROM: 8 Mbits

Take some things that look like Space Hoppers, add a couple of fools and devils to throw them around and you can only be playing a Japanese puzzle game...

MAGICAL DROP

FROM A FOOL TO A STAR!

There's not a great deal of difference between the characters, except for the fact that the Devil can have two specials and the poor old Fool doesn't get any. This is a good handicapping system if you're playing against someone who's either really good (give them the Fool) or really crap (give them the Devil and you play the Fool).

Funny looking Chariot, but there you go...

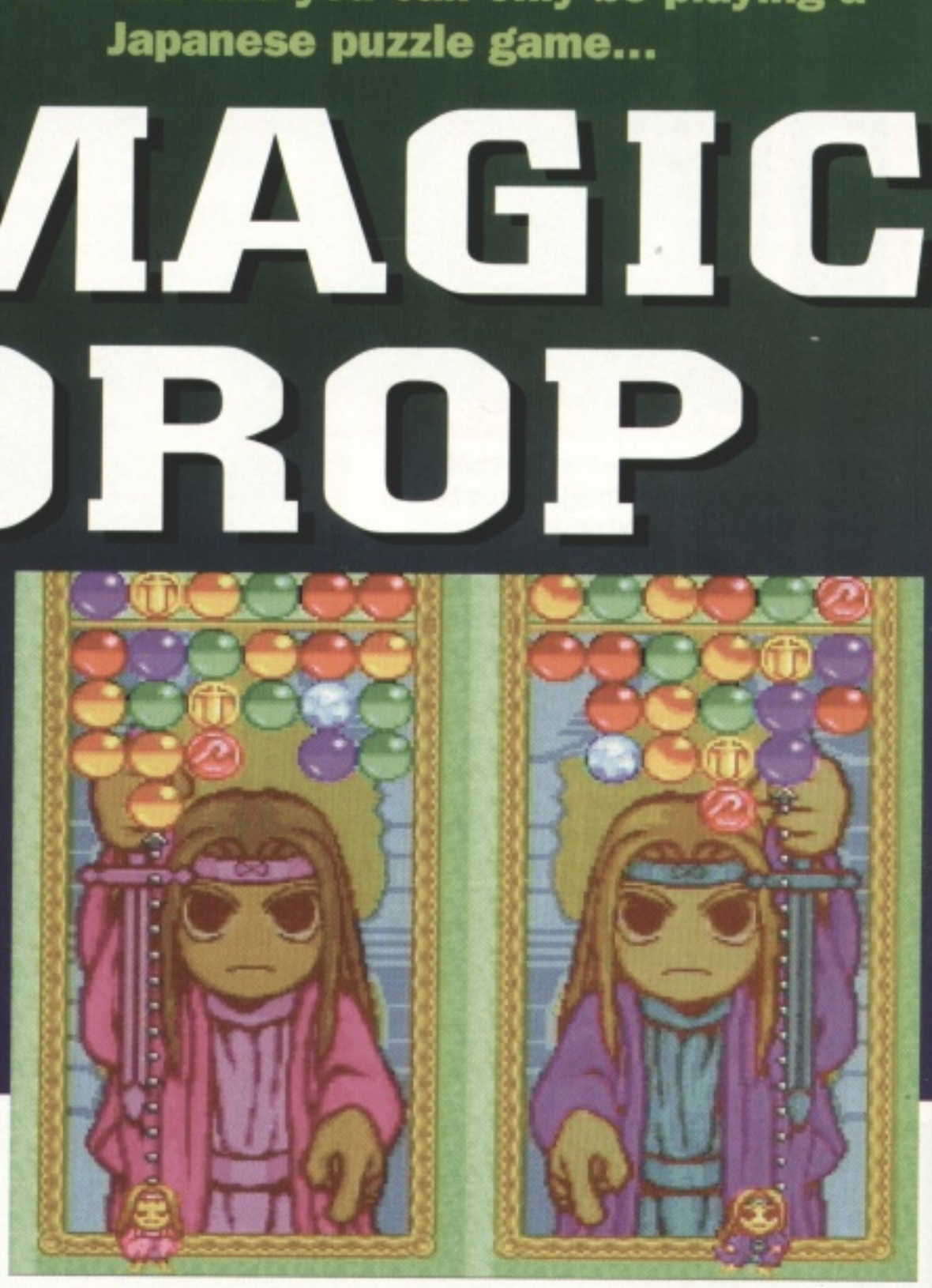
You'll get a more complex game if you go for him...

The Star complete with eyes bigger than her body.

Pick me! Pick me! Oh, go on...

The magician – someone really ought to tell her about that headband.

The Priestess – complete with funky hairdo. Brilliant!



Magician versus Magician: if the one on the left picks up those yellow balls, shuffles left one step then chucks them back up, all of them will disappear.

But you don't just get Space Hoppers, you can also have squares, circles or even a collection of odd shapes (stars, hearts and so on) to play with, and you don't just get fools and devils who manipulate the aforementioned shapes, there are magicians, priestesses and chariots (Roman soldiers) to choose from in *Magical Drop*.

In essence, the game's extremely easy: you control a small character at the bottom of the screen (chariot, priestess, whoever) while at the top of the screen there are a few rows of different coloured whatevers (we'll call 'em balls for the sake of this review). The player picks up a coloured ball by pressing a button which then comes down the screen into his arms and then, by pressing another button,

Oh yes, very clever of you. Look, I er, had to, er, was just about to use my special, er, okay, okay, one more go and this time I'm not going to be so easy on you.

chucks it back up the screen to sit on top of another ball of the same colour. Once you've built a stack of three or more balls of the same colour, the stack disappears. The idea being to get rid of as many of the balls from the screen as possible. That's it really. However, as this is a two-page review, there's plenty of space to tell you about the finer points of *Magical Drop*.

Things are going pear-shaped for the Magician on the right. Getting those red specials together might be a good idea round about now.

C AL

Here you're battling against the high score. You only get three points for destroying a stack of three space hoppers, so, in order to get anywhere near 10,000 points, you're going to have to plan and set off some chain reactions.

In one-player mode again, and as things get a bit pressured, the backgrounds change just in case you hadn't noticed it's all getting hairy!

Blocks can make things very easy to see. Of course it doesn't help you play the game at all really, but it's nice to have graphic variety. Sort of.

A Chariot caught in the act of destroying a large number of yellow space hoppers. This is not going to make the Fool happy because his side of the screen is going to get very crowded, very soon.

The puzzle mode. Here, you've got to clear the screen of everything in just six seconds. The later puzzles can be fiendishly tough!

First of all, there's a single player mode. Here you get to choose which character you want to be – the main difference between the characters being what colour becomes their 'special ball'. Suppose we've chosen the Magician. The Magician's ball is red. Throw three red special balls together and all the red balls from the Magician's side of the screen disappear. And here's where the fun starts because, imagine all the red balls disappear, all the remaining coloured balls then sort of shoot up the screen to fill in any holes that the red balls left. This then means that if more coloured balls fall together (green, blue, or yellow) in stacks of three or more then they disappear too.

The more balls you can make disappear at once, the more get chucked across the screen to the other player (computer in one-player mode, another human in two-player), making it more difficult for them to keep their side of the screen clear. The person who gets so chocka with balls that the rows reach the bottom of the screen, loses.

As well as the single and two-player modes, there's a 'you against the high score' mode where you just keep going as long as you can, and a weird single player puzzle mode where you have a set amount of time to clear a previously laid-out screen of balls.

Magical Drop becomes obsessive. It's one of those games you think you've been playing for 10 minutes and then realise that the last six hours have disappeared. And the game actually gets better the more you play it, because you can become skillful at actually planning and setting up series of chain reactions. Fantastic Space-Hoppering fun.

● **Andy Smith**

At the beginning of the game there's an elaborate story outlining how all of this came about and how you're going to have to save the world now. Or something.

Fool versus Fool and this time the balls have changed to shapes. Don't ask why, they just wanted to, okay?

MAGICAL DROP
Data East

GRAPHICS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY
60%	60%	85%

GAMELIFE	OVERALL SCORE:
85%	85%

VERDICT: A brilliantly enjoyable puzzle game. It's immense fun in one-player mode because you can just keep going and going. Even more fun in two-player mode, of course. It takes 10 minutes to get the basics, and days to discover the finer points of creating and setting off those opponent-hurting chain reactions. *Magical Drop* is a must for competitive puzzle fans.

Donkey Kong Country 2:

Diddy Kong's Quest

Part 2

After leaving you high and dry last month, we're back to guide you through the final three worlds and the hidden 'Lost World' too. Not bad eh?

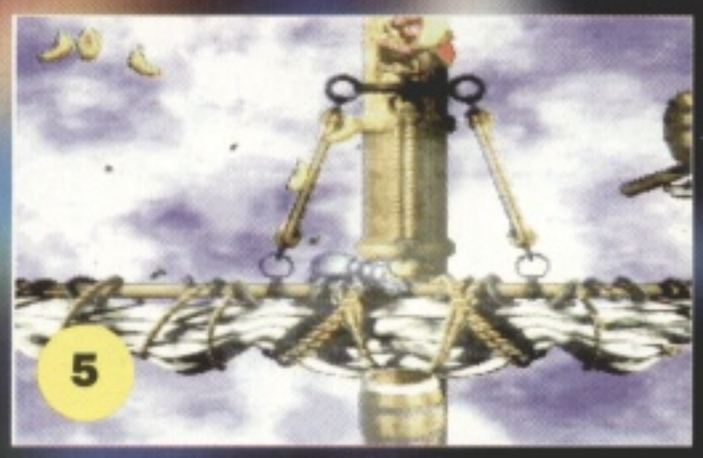
Gloomy Gulch

Ghostly Grove

Near the start, break one of the Kloak's chests for a red extra life balloon (01). Now, when you reach the platform with the 'O' on it, jump off the left-hand side and helicopter spin back under the platform to find a DK Coin. Now, a little further on, find the two Krunchas on the steps leading down (02). Throw a barrel at the wall after them (it's marked with a single banana) to reveal a bonus game door. There's an 'N' to be found in a chest (03). After that, climb the disappearing ropes, quickly jumping from one to the other, to find a bonus barrel. Finally, you'll find an invisible 'G' surrounded by a circle of 8 bananas near the end of the level.

Haunted Hall

It's another roller-coaster level this 'un. Jump onto the higher rail after your first encounter with a Kackle (04), then quickly jump on top of the wooden tunnel to enter a bonus game. At the end of the game you'll roll backwards along this tunnel then drop in front of it and roll into it for a second bonus game (05). Past halfway, after the third Kackle and 'N' letter, take the lower route at the second break in the tracks for a third and final bonus game. Jump early to hit the gap. The DK Coin here is hidden in the tunnel directly left of the end point. Just walk left to find it



Gusty Glade

Left of your start point you'll find Rattly the snake. Jump left and team-throw up to get to a ledge to reach him (06). Watch for a 'K' hidden in a chest near the start too (07). Next, find the steep hill after the three barrel kannons. Helicopter jump right off the ledge above the third Kannon to find a DK coin. A bonus barrel can be found just before the 'No Rattly' sign, you can't miss it (08). Jump

into it for a bonus game. Another bonus game can be found by lobbing the Kannonball you'll find hidden in one of the two chests (the other has an 'N' in it) into the Kannon a bit later on (09).

Parrot Chute Panic

Walk right from the start and helicopter jump down the first shaft after the start platform. Go left and you'll find a DK Coin on a ledge (10). After using two Squawks you'll pick up a 'K' letter (11). Now get the third

Squawk and fly left at the 'O', over three hornets in a line and into a large room (12). Now fly up and left to a hole in the wall leading to a bonus game. After the continue barrel, use two more Squawks and go past a Spiny. Now use Dixie's helicopter jump to go left over two Zingers and climb a honey wall to find a bonus game entrance (13). There's a bit of a warp in this level too. Use the crate you find to break open the nearby wall and go through the entrance to skip some, but not all, of the action.

Web Woods

You'll find a 'K' a little way into the level, hidden on a series of platforms above you. Team-jump up to reach them (14). Team-

jump onto the platform above the entrance to Squitter's lair (15) to be fired onto a hill. There you'll find a crate containing a green extra life balloon. After the 'N', use Squitter's web platforms to cross a gap with

Neckys above it (16). Keep going past a backwards-pointing arrow of bananas and you'll reach a Klump who fires a slow Kannonball. Now follow the cannonball back to the left, where it will hit a wall and open a door to a bonus game. A little later on in the level, after another backwards-pointing arrow, a Klump will fire a fast Kannonball which will break another wall revealing another a bonus game. A DK Coin is up for grabs at the end target. You'll have to time your jump to perfection to get it though. Good luck.

Kreepy Krow

Bit of a toughie, this one. First you'll be attacked by phantom Neckys who'll swoop down at you (17). Jump them until you see a

real, more solid-looking Necky. Jump on it to turn it into a barrel which you can fling at the boss Krow. Some hooks will now appear. Use them to climb onto the rigging. Dodge left and right as you climb to

avoid the falling eggs (18). There's more phantom Neckys awaiting you at the top. As before, jump them and jump on the real Necky to get a barrel which you can throw at Krow (19). Climb the hooks and dodge the

much faster moving eggs again. A final bout of frantic Necky dodging and barrel flinging and Krow will be no more (20).

K Rool's Keep

Arctic Abyss

Get the 'K' near the start by helicopter jumping across the water (21). Now, after

the first water level, drop a DK barrel, head right, then up, then use Enguarde's special attack on a wall marked with two bananas to open a door to a bonus game. After the continue barrel, head down and left. Go up past three Shuris. At the top, use Enguarde's special attack to the right to cross an opening before the water level drops and find a DK Coin (22). Get the 'N' and look left after the first long vertical climb to see a 'G' hidden in the right-hand wall. Find four circling Shuris, go left past three Puftups and down (23). Swim through the right wall past the "No Swordfish" sign for another bonus game (24).

Windy Well

In between the first two platforms there's a 'K' to get (25). A barrel kannon below it will blast you back up. After the 'O', jump up onto a platform and jump left into the gap

with a single banana in it (26). Now go left, under the Zinger to find a bonus barrel. A DK Coin awaits you after the 'N' letter, beneath the next platform. Helicopter-jump right under the three Zingers to reach it (27). At the 'No Squawks' sign, head for and fall off the platform just lower than the end target's platform. Keep going right and you'll find a bonus barrel beneath the end target (28). And finally, a 'G' is one of the items available at the end target.

Castle Crush

Early on in the level, use the DK Barrel to kill the Kutlass and walk to the right to find Rambi (29). Now, when you see a banana

arrow pointing to the left, use his special attack to break the wall there to find a bonus game (30). Just past the continue

barrel, walk through the left wall adjacent to the floating DK barrel to find Squawks (31).

Now fly ahead of the ascending floor and get the 'N'. Just before the 'No Squawks' sign, head right and down, to collect the DK coin before the floor catches up with you. At the 'No Squawks' sign, he'll turn into a TNT barrel, so use the barrel to break open the left-hand wall, marked by a banana arrow, and expose a bonus game (32).

Clapper's Cavern

Team-throw up to find a hook directly above the entry point (33). Now go up, then right, to find a door to a bonus level. After this, use the team-throw again at the 'K' to reveal another hook (34). Now head up and then right, as before, to find a DK Coin. When you reach Enguarde, take him right, then up, then left down a passage which ends with a banana coin. Now use Enguarde's special attack to break the right-hand wall of the small room that you are in to find a bonus game (35). To help you on your travels, a rather useful '!' barrel is hidden by the single banana just past the 'N'. Jump up to reach it (36).

Chain Link Chamber

A 'K' is at the bottom of the first long vertical chain, you know (37). And an '!' is hidden in the left-hand wall of the vertical climb after the 'O'. Now watch for the first three Krooks on the level. Kill the

top one to find a Kannonball. Jump down and across the shaft to the right with it and kill the middle Krook to expose the Kannon. Pop the Kannonball in the Kannon for a bonus game. Past the continue barrel there are two Klumps which shoot Kannonballs down a pair of chains which you must climb (38). Part of the way up there is a single banana on the right-hand wall. Jump through the wall at that point and head to the right to find an 'N' and a DK Coin (39). After climbing these two chains, cross to the right and up a bit. You can jump through the left wall there. Kill the two Klumps and go through a door to a bonus game (40). A 'G' is hidden past the end target and up, so don't hit it yet.

Toxic Tower

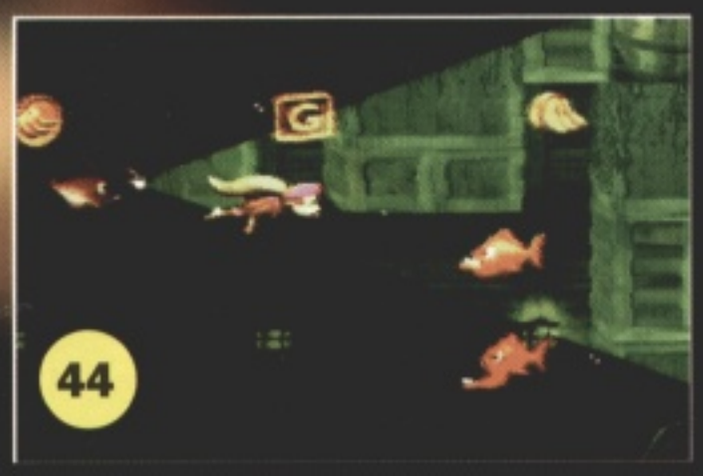
You'll have to be quick to find the secrets here. After the 'A' of bananas, use Rattly's special jump to reach the platforms above (41). When you see a single Zinger between

two of the platforms, drop down to kill him and fall to the right where a DK coin can be found (42). Once you've got Squitter, use web platforms up and right, then, where

you see a single hornet in the wall, web him, then walk through the wall to find a bonus game. Be quick with Squawks to stay ahead of the toxic ooze. Dodging the Zingers rather than shooting them is much faster.

Stronghold Showdown

Nothing happens here apart from you get awarded a KremKoin (43). Money for old rope, mate.



The Flying Kroc

Screech's Sprint

After the first long vertical rope, surrounded by Neckys, jump left then use a team-throw to reach an overhead platform carrying a Kannonball (44). Take it right, to the Kannon, to get a bonus game. Now, after the continue barrel, a race will start (45).

You've got to finish first to survive. After flying past two lines of Zingers, look for an arrow of bananas pointing downwards (46). Instead of following it, as you should, head up and right instead to find a DK Coin. The chances are you'll be far too busy trying to win the exceedingly tricky race to bother though!

K. Pool

Now this is very, VERY tricky. You've got to learn the patterns of K. Rool's attacks if you want to stand a chance of survival. First, pick up the Kannonball, and fling it into his gun while it is 'sucking' (47). Next he'll fire spiked balls at you. Jump them and him a couple of times until another spike-free ball appears. As before, throw it into his gun while it is sucking. You must keep jumping the spiked balls watching for spike-free ones which you can throw (48). These are occasionally hidden in barrels which you must jump on and break to get to the ball inside (49). Dixie's helicopter jump is useful for jumping over lines of spiked balls incidentally.

After a few 'hits' he'll start throwing freezing ice-clouds at you and purple control-reversing clouds too (50). Jump these and dodge him when he rushes at you between attacks. Keep it up until you get a final Kannonball to fling at him which will finish him off, thank God.

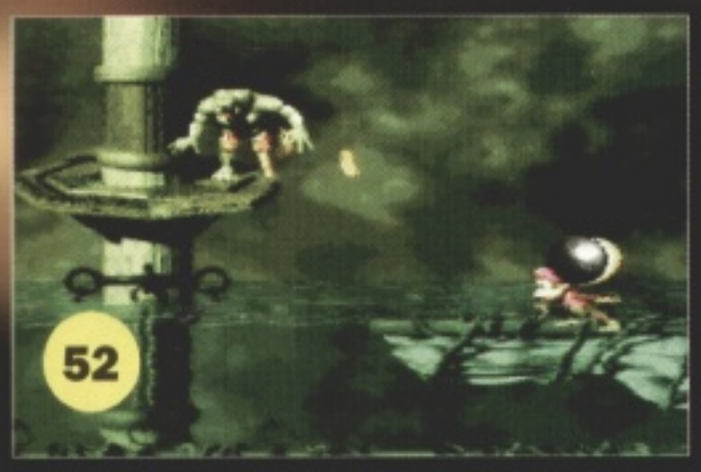
Now, this will appear to be the end of the game;

Donkey Kong is rescued and K. Rool disappears, but it isn't. Oh no. To finish off K. Rool properly, you must complete the six 'Lost World' levels too. Five are accessed by paying the Klubbas in worlds two to six 15 Kremkoins each to cross their bridge. Each Klubba allows access to one of the levels (51). When you've paid all five Klubbas and completed all five 'Lost World' levels a sixth and final 'Krocodile Kore' end level will appear. Beat K. Rool there to complete the game.

Lost World

Jungle Jinx

The Lost World levels are a bit lacking in secrets really. But here goes. There's a DK coin next to the 'O' letter under the platform



just before halfway (52). At the Flitter, go left and take a big jump, with Dixie, over the bananas to reach it. The bonus games in the Lost World award DK Coins instead of Kremkoins.

Black Ice Battle

You'll find a Kannonball on a ledge in a chest directly below the 'N' (53). Carry it down a couple of levels past three Klampons

to a ledge on the right side. Grab the 'G' and use the Kannonball to defeat the Zingers, then use it in the Kannon to find a bonus game (54).

Klobber Karnage

At the end of the level, jump in the Diddy barrel and blast up and right to a blast barrel. Now blast up and right to bonus barrel (55). A successful outcome at the bonus game will give you another DK Coin.

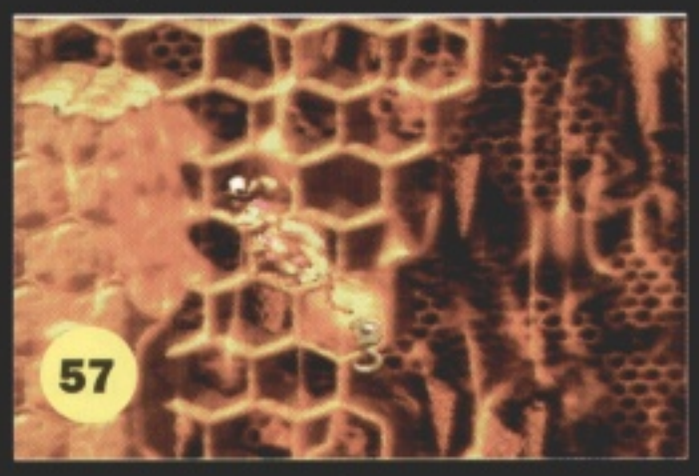
Fiery Furnace

There's a bonus barrel high up, shortly before the end target. You can either use the Cat O' 9 Tails to throw you into it (56) or team throw into the Barrel Kannon above the fourth Cat O' 9 Tails after the continue barrel to get there instead. The string of bananas shows you the way to go.

That's it. Well done, you've finished *Donkey Kong Country 2*!

Animal Antics

For an 'O' letter, head left at the bottom of the first long vertical shaft in Enguarde's area (57). At the end of Squitter's part of the



level make a web platform over the blast barrel (58), jump up to it and over the hill to the right to find a bonus barrel.

Krocodile Kore

This level is very much like the previous K. Rool level but a lot shorter fortunately. If it's at all possible, avoid the control-reversing clouds. They'll make finishing the level exceedingly tricky (59). As before you've got

to throw Kannonballs into K. Rools 'sucking' gun (60). Perform this once and he'll be gone for good (61). You'll now be treated to a DK Hero display, where you'll be ranked against Mario, Yoshi and Link, according to how many DK Coins you have (62). And you'll witness the demise of K. Rool's island (63).

SNES TECH & GAMING ANSWERS

GAMEFREAK

By Tony Mott

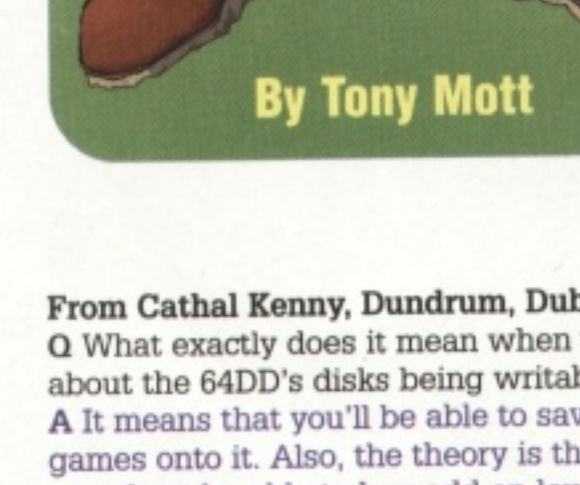
Okay. Your partner's left you. You've lost your job/been kicked out of school. Worst of all, you've got a SNES-related query that's bothering you. Come here and make it all better.

planned for the SNES?
A No. Well, not for UK release, anyhow.

From Mr. D., Guernsey:
Q Are Hal Laboratory part of the N64 Dream Team?
A No. The Dream Team are a group of developers that have been picked by Nintendo Of America, and therefore do not include any Japanese companies. There are, of course, numerous Nipponese softcos currently working on the machine but, unlike their US counterparts, NCL aren't into shouting their plans from the rooftops.
Q If Hal Lab left Nintendo (as Square Soft have), could they take *Kirby* with them?
A Square haven't left Nintendo, merely chosen not to produce the next *Final Fantasy* game for the format (if there's not a Square game on the N64 by 1997 I'll take up ballet) but, going back to your point, the answer is: probably.
Q Are there *any* murder mystery games on the SNES?
A Um... well there's *Cluedo*, but that's about yer lot.

From Jason McElhinney, Blackpool:
Q Can I trust these mail order companies? I want some foreign RPGs (preferably from the US), but I only see them for sale mail order. It seems a bit dodgy to send £40 through the post for a game.
A I bought games by mail order for years (before I started getting 'em for free, heh heh) and I never had any problems. My top tips would simply be: Go for the guys whose ads look professional and not dodgy photocopied bodge jobs, (and who include their address); try to order with a credit card wherever possible ('cos credit card companies can offer insurance on goods bought mail order – check with them for details) and never send cash; and keep a record of what you've

From Cathal Kenny, Dundrum, Dublin:
Q What exactly does it mean when talking about the 64DD's disks being writable?
A It means that you'll be able to save your games onto it. Also, the theory is that you'll somehow be able to buy add-on levels to games that you already have. Yeah, I know it sounds messy, and I doubt Nintendo themselves are yet completely sure about how the finished thing will turn out.



Q I see Ocean are now part of the Dream Team. Is there any chance of *Micro Machines 64*?
A Nope.
Q I have heard a rumour that *Donkey Kong Fantasy* is coming out for the N64 on the 64DD? Is there any truth in this?
A I gather there's certainly a *Donkey Kong* title in the works for the N64, but it's probably going to be cart-based and certainly not going to be called *Donkey Kong Fantasy*.
Q Are there any decent racing games

IT'S BACK

GAMEFREAK'S MOST WANTED

Now that the N64's just around the corner, I thought this would be just the right time to resurrect GF's Most Wanted, where I hand-pick a choice selection of upcoming releases based on how much they've got my tubes lubed in anticipation of their arrival, so to speak.

1 *Super Street Fighter Zero* • SNES • TBA

Well, I nearly fell off me chair when this was announced. I've played the coin-op and PlayStation (yeah, sorry) versions to death and a 'Super' version has me dead excited. (PlayStation version shown.)

2 *Super Mario 64* • N64 • June (Japan)

What did you expect? Anything Shigs touches seems to turn to gold, and I'm hoping this isn't going to be the exception to the rule. Check out Big Boo in 3D! And those Koopa Troopers! Cor.

3 *Zelda VI* • SNES • TBA

I was rather hoping that *Super Mario RPG* would turn out better than it did, but it was a trifle disappointing. So it's all down to this game to make me happy, which I think it will.

4 *Mario Kart 64* • N64 • TBA

As the best *Super Mario Kart* player here, it's with no small amount of anticipation that I await the opportunity to transfer my supremacy to its sequel. It has *so* much potential.

5 *Doom 64* • N64 • TBA

Forget all you've been hearing about *Quake* – if what I've been hearing about this game turns out to be true, it's going to be a the show-stealer when it's finally unveiled at E3. (SNES version shown.)

ordered, including details from any cheques you send as payment. Good luck.

Q In which issue did you start the profiles for *FFIII* in your FF Forum section?

A In the same issue we started FF Forum – number 30.

Q Can you convince me not to go out and buy a PlayStation?

A Hey, that's Nintendo's job, not mine. All I'd say is that I see every single noteworthy PlayStation release that comes out and not one of them does things to me like Nintendo's games do.

Q Does *Super Play* have any plans for another free poster? (I have the *MK* movie poster on my wall.)

A I'm sure some top poster action isn't out of the question, but look out for the possibility of some different juicy freebies in the meantime...

Q Why aren't there any decent scrolling beat-'em-ups around? The only ones I see are the mediocre ones that get around 60%-70%.

A Because it's simply a game genre that lends itself so perfectly to mediocrity, I guess. Let me think... the last effort I can remember making me return to it out of interest rather than necessity (don't let anyone tell you reviewing games is 100% fun) was *Ninja Warriors* which – ta-dah! – has just been given a UK release from Titus under the name *Ninja Warriors: The New Generation*. It's both technically excellent and gloriously violent.

From Pai Li, Rotherham:

Q I am a great fan of the *Sim City* games. When will *Sim City 2000* and *Sim Town* be released in the UK?

A Never! Sorry to be so down about it, but there's as much chance of them getting a UK release as there is Sean getting a round of drinks in.

Q Will any of the *Sim* series come out on the N64?

A None are currently planned, but there's every chance of them appearing once more companies start jumping aboard the good ship N64. My estimate? Late '97.

Q Is it true that Sega are planning to launch a new machine which is supposed to be more powerful than the N64?

A Yup, but then isn't everyone?

Q When will the new *Bomberman* game come out in the UK?

A I don't believe it's getting a UK release, but I'll investigate further. More news as and when.

Q Will Alison go out with me?

A Hold on, I'll ask her... Ah. She's flattered by the offer, but doesn't think that her current boyfriend would really approve.

From Christopher Easton, Perth, Scotland:

Q If I get a 50/60Hz conversion will I be able to see all of *FFIII*'s end sequence?

A Oh yes indeed, sir.

Q In the Big Chair section of issue 43 it said that you had gone to *Edge* magazine, but you still do the Gamefreak column. Why is this?

A Hey, true Gamefreaks are rather thin on the ground these days, and besides, no-one else would do it for the payment of a couple of pints that I do it for.

From someone who forgot to include both their name and address (Doh!):

Q What was that Robot they used to sell with the NES for? (Come on, you remember.)

A Of course I remember. It was called R.O.B. (which stood for Robotic Operating Buddy) and it was, to put it mildly, rather pump.

Q Would *Doom* on the Virtual Boy save it? And would the machine be able to handle such a game?

A I don't think even giving away a free Sharon Stone lookalike with every machine would save the Virtual Boy, to be honest. And, no, despite its 32-bit RISC processing power, the Veebee couldn't manage a decent version of id's classic.

From Andrew Crane, Bournemouth, Dorset:

Q What are the most addictive games you have ever played?

A Ah, true to your usual form, Mr. Crane. Off the top of my head, *Super Mario World*, *Super Metroid*, *Soul Blazer*, *Puzzle Bobble* and *Tetris* stand out.

Q What as-yet-unnamed N64 updates are you still desperate for?

A Ooh, reckon I'd make do with *F-Zero 2000*.

Q If you were made Emperor of Videogames, what commands would you spill forth onto the games industry?

A Strict limitations on the use of FMV, a ban on cheesy American guitar game soundtracks, the introduction of GCSEs and 'A' Levels in Videogame Design & Programming, and the eradication of games clearly developed to generate cash for their publishers rather than pleasure for those who play them.

DAYDREAMING

It's just past midnight at night as I write this, and your ideas for fantasy games keep me wide awake as the wee hours approach, I must say. The first reader to keep me from my mug of Horlicks is Simon Franklin of Leeds:

"I'd love to see a game crossover between *Sonic Blastman* and *Killer Instinct* in the arcades. No joystick or buttons, but a huge fluffy Sabre Wulf to beat the living daylights out of! The aim would be to get the highest combo, using punches, kicks, baseball bats, etc. The CPU would stop the game at the point when the combo could be blocked and stick the result in with the highest combos. I reckon this would be brilliant!"

Hey, not bad! Although I can't see Sabre Wulf lasting very long at the mercy of the hands and feet of the UK's arcade-going public. There's nought but a dog's bark, a car alarm and the noise of a few aled-up revellers outside, now. Let Chris Pole of Cardiff's offering take our minds off the scuzzular world outside:

"How about an X-Men ARPG? There could be a terrific plot drawn from almost 30 years of comics. You could select a team of X-Men, and fly to any destination using their Blackbird plane. Magic could come in the form of their mutant powers, such as Storm's wind *(Parp! – GF)* and lightning, Wolverine's healing factor, and Rogue's power of absorption. There could be terrific character interaction. You could even go to the age of the Apocalypse.

To build up experience, you could train in the Danger Room. Imagine the bosses: Magneto, Sinister, Apocalypse."

Yeah, but why not take things a bit further? How about an ARPG based on the Secret Wars, including *all* the characters from the Marvel Universe? All the stats are there ready and waiting in the form of scenarios for TSR's paper-and-dice RPG, Marvel Super Heroes. There's got to be more life in the Marvel characters than just fighting games, after all...

Right. Before I get my head down, let's hear out this month's prize-winner, David Merrill of Edinburgh:

"I want to see a Starsky And Hutch game where you'd pick either one of the two so that there'd be two different ways of playing. It'd be done on a day-by-day basis: the first thing you'd do every morning is get orders from Captain Dobie, then you'd go out in the famous red-and-white wagon and burn up the 3D texture-mapped streets at speeds of up to 100mph on your way to your first port of call – the crime scene. From there you'd have to round up information, get involved in car chases and shoot-outs (done like in *Shadowrun*), and it'd be set in an enormous city where everything else just goes about its business.

"There'd also strong RPG elements, and you'd meet various NPCs in cafes, motels and bars, including, of course, Huggy Bear, who you'd get clues from to help in your investigations."

Excellent stuff. Keep those daydreams coming.

ELECTRONICS BOUTIQUE – AN APOLOGY

It seems we upset Electronics Boutique last month when we suggested that there might be 'clueless spongs' working in their shops. Well, we're sorry, we didn't mean it – we were just having a little joke and would like to take this opportunity to say, categorically, that we're not aware of any clueless spongs working for Electronics Boutique.

NEED ADVICE?

Then come here for it:

Gamefreak, *Super Play*, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath BA1 2BW. (Or e-mail: tmott@futurenet.co.uk)

MODE 7

By ZY NICHOLSON

CALLING ALL CHEATS, CRACKERS, AND GAME-FREAKS!

Disaster: we're almost out of *Super Play* pens! If you send top tips to Mode 7, *Super Play*, Future Publishing Ltd, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath BA1 2BW, who knows what you might now win?

KILLER INSTINCT

(Nintendo)
*SP*36: 85%

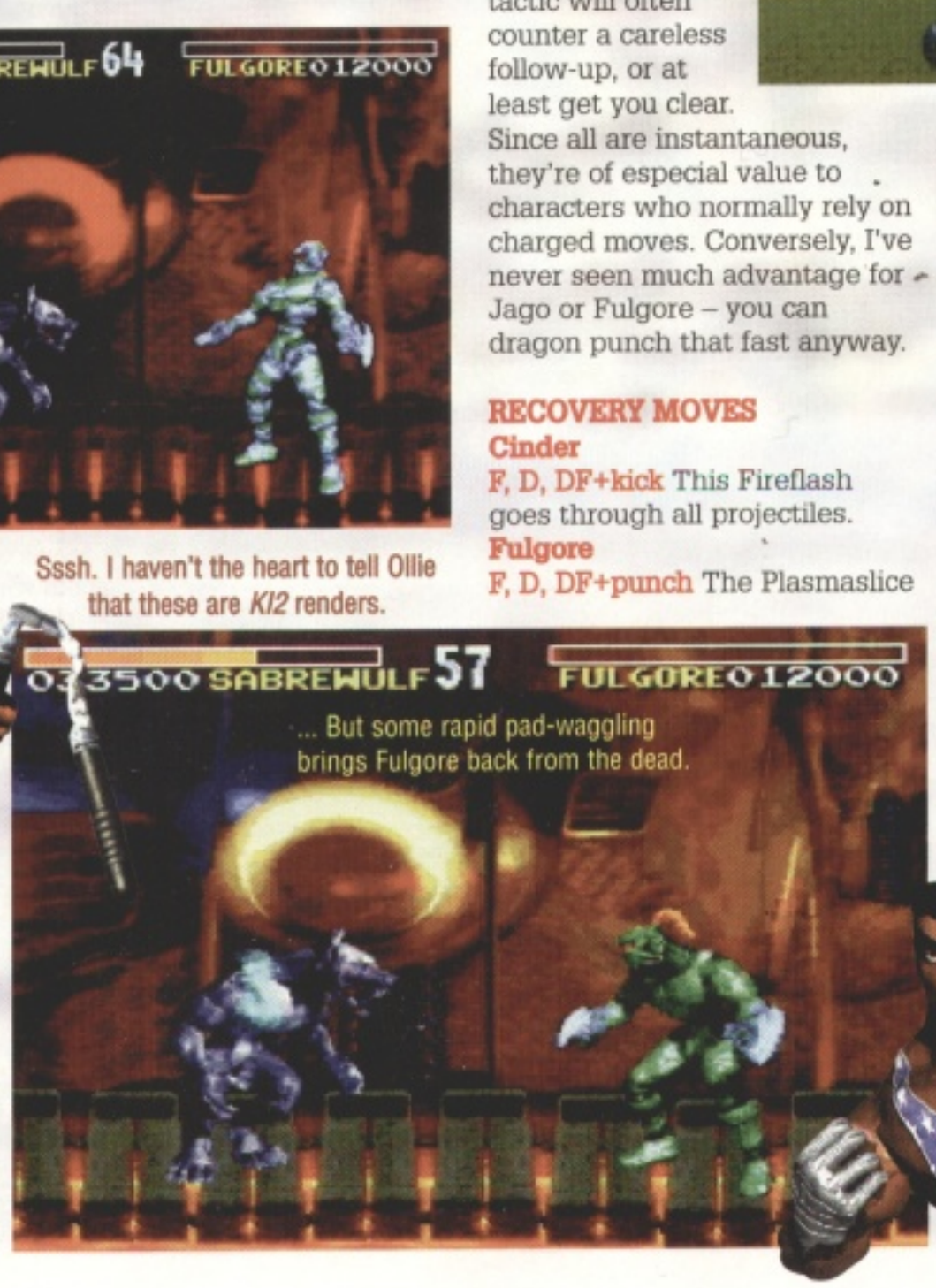
- Recovery Moves
- Dizzied and dying...

But wait!

Seems I took it for granted that many of you would be familiar with the original coin-op, so I failed to mention some of the more basic features in my master tips. I've been prompted to make amends by players like Chee H. Hui of Stroud and Barry J. Morgan of Epsom, so here goes.

Recovery moves are retaliatory attacks that you execute when your character is getting back on their feet after a knockdown. This tactic will often counter a careless follow-up, or at least get you clear. Since all are instantaneous, they're of especial value to characters who normally rely on charged moves. Conversely, I've never seen much advantage for Jago or Fulgore – you can dragon punch that fast anyway.

Sssh. I haven't the heart to tell Ollie that these are *KI2* renders.



RECOVERY MOVES

Cinder
F, D, DF+kick This Fireflash goes through all projectiles.

Fulgore
F, D, DF+punch The Plasmaslice goes through normal projectiles.

Glacius
D, DF, F+kick A weak liquid uppercut to deter cornering.

Jago
F, D, DF+punch A dragon p – oops, I mean 'Tiger Fury'.

Orchid
B, F+kick The best of the bunch – a spinning kick attack. If you use a quick or medium kick, you can even initiate a combo from this two-hit move. Try following it with a B+6 backflip.

Riptor
B, F+kick A high leap.

Sabrewulf
B, F+kick A swift claw swipe.

Spinal
D, D+any attack An extremely fast skeleport escape.

Thunder
D, DB, B+punch A Sammamish of medium strength.

TJ Combo
B, F+kick A high Flying Knee.

'TJ' actually stands for 'terylene jim-jams'.

WITH... MY... LAST... BREATH... It is possible to speed recovery from a dizzy by whacking the pad around. You can actually drag yourself back from the brink of death. When the screen turns red, your opponent may take a moment setting up their finishing move: now's the time to spin the D-pad (easier with a joystick) and waggle all the buttons. If you're quick enough, you may earn yourself a tiny scrap of energy and recover. In this state you're vulnerable – you can't even block a special move, let alone take a jab – but your own attacks now inflict DOUBLE damage. A single combo could be enough to wipe out your surprised attacker. However, you may lose friends if you pull off a Killer and finish with a Humiliation at this point.

SPAWN

(Acclaim)

*SP*40: 56%

- **Passwords**

Another Acclaim licence destined for the bargain bins, if Sean's What Cart assessment is anything to go by. Y'know, I'm inclined to agree with him on this one. But having watched young Overton struggling to retain his sanity after being wiped out by an unfair boss move for the fifteenth time, I thought I'd print Joseph Doyle's passwords anyway.

Stage 3 4H253DGF
Stage 4 4CC138CF
Stage 5 0C4F458H
Stage 6 D31551FG
Stage 7 09BF596F
Ending DB8D9B4H

Out of sympathy, you understand.

EARTHWORM JIM 2

(Virgin)

*SP*39: 85%

- **Debug Mode**
- **Extra ammo & hardware**
- **Level Skip**

I thought we'd tipped *EWJ2* already, but my attempts to compile a complete index of all the Mode 7 cheats ever printed suggest I am mistaken. Here, have some cheaty things on me.

Debug Mode
Pause the game and enter the pad combination of SELECT, left, right, A, X, X, left, right. The image will be replaced by a rough text menu: welcome to Shiny Entertainment's 'Super Cheat Screen'. Map View Mode, Cheat Mode, your starting level – you can choose it and toggle it all here with the Y and B buttons.

Extra Ammo
Pause the game again and press SELECT, X, X, X, X, X, X, SELECT. You can repeat this cheat over and over as needed.

Three-Way Gun
Pause and enter X, X, X, X, A, A, X, SELECT. Adios, mosquitos!

Plasma Gun
Pause, surprisingly, and hit X, X, X, X, A, A, A, SELECT. Mmm, firepower.

Level Skip
Pause for a second. Think about your life. Why are you here? Do you have a purpose? What does it all mean? Are you happy? Now enter SELECT, B, X, A, A, X, B, SELECT and unpause. Twice. You've skipped a level of *EWJ2*. There, you ARE happy, aren't you? Good. I'm glad we had this little chat.

MEGA MAN 7

(Capcom)

*SP*38: 79%

- **Special Moves**
- **Super Password**

Seeing the password for a bonus fighting match we printed in SP43, Ho Seng Han of Selangor, Malaysia has handily supplied a list of special moves. Handy for me, too, because I never got a chance to try this out.

Mega Man
Arrow Slash: down, down-towards, towards + Y
Leg Breaker: down, down + B
Charge (Twin) Shot: Hold Y, charge, release and press Y again
Feint Warp: up, up
Feint Warp Fake: up, up, down

Bass
Booster Kick: towards, down, down-towards + Y
Sonic Crusher: (in air) towards, towards + Y
Feint Warp: up, up

What do you mean, you didn't get *SP43*? The code is subtly given to you as a 'serial number' (Capcom no.14155585-78236251) if you manage to complete the normal game. Enter it as a password (1415/5585/7823/6251) and hold L+R before hitting START to reach the fighting game. Entered on its own, this password also starts you at the end of the game with all collectable equipment and weaponry.

COMPTON'S MOST WANTED

Satisfy Mr Compton's sinister urges by sending him cheats and tips for these games...

(1) Panel de Pon. If you're thinking what I'm thinking, you know that I don't know something you might. And if you do, you also know that I simply must know what you know, or my name's not Compton.

(2) Breath of Fire II. Odd fish, this roleplaying fellow. I'm told that it's almost impossible to see everything in just one play. Secret things are my passion, so I want yours.

(3) DKC2. Slipping down the list, but there's still a vague glimmer of hope that something more interesting than fifty lives and no barrels might appear.

BOMBERMAN 3

(Hudsonsoft)

*SP*37: 91%

- **Hidden levels**

Remember those hidden battle screens we believe you can access in *Bomberman 2* and *3*? Deakin Scott of Chertsey wrote in to tell us that you access them in *SBM3* by hammering the X button as fast as possible on the title screen. I tried it out myself, but after several attempts and a rapid fire joystick I still hadn't heard that magical sound of confirmation. Nothing happened. Normally I'd ignore such a thing (you wouldn't believe the number of fake cheats I receive from prize-hungry losers) but then it occurred to me that maybe, just maybe, Deakin has an auto-fire joypad by Hudson Soft or ASCII that's tuned to exactly the right frequency of tappage.

Anyway, I'll throw it open and see if anyone else can find the right method. Deakin's instructions weren't exactly comprehensive, so maybe there's something else you have to do. Let me know what you find out, eh?

DON'T ASK ALLAN

INVALUABLE MONTHLY GAMING ADVICE

Dear Zy,
I purchased *Breath of Fire* two weeks ago but now I am stuck. I do not seem to be able to free Ross's Daughter from the safe in Auria. I have Karn but he does not seem to be able to open it. What am I doing wrong?
Danny Smudgedname (is that Bosch?), P'boro, Cambs.
Zy says:
Either you don't quite have Karn (i.e. you've met him in prison but he hasn't joined your party yet), or he hasn't yet increased his confidence by finding the great Book of Thieves in the sarcophagi of Krypt, or you haven't got the Mirror from the tower near Bleak. Ross's daughter is hiding in the safe by choice: the mirror lets Ross see his dead wife, and she sorts him out from beyond the grave.

It's always in the last one you check. No, really.

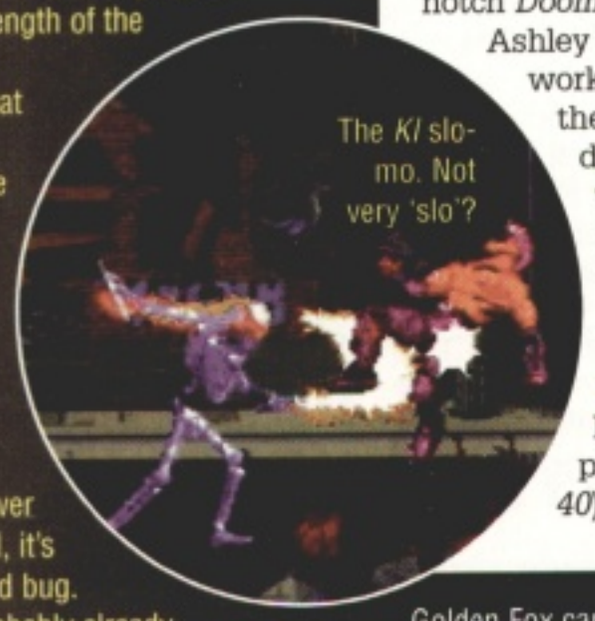
Dear Zy,
I am stuck on *Doom*. In Phobos I have killed the twin Barons (around the beginning of the level) and then I am stuck with a pit filled with demons that chew on me and kill me within five seconds. The only weapons I have are a pistol, shotgun, chaingun, chainsaw, and rockets. Have I missed out a gun, or am I going the wrong way? Sorry, I missed issues 37, 38, 39, and 40.
Steven Borg, no address (the Borg have no need of addresses).
Zy says:
Er... Those twin Barons are bosses. Killing them is not the beginning of the level, it is the end of the entire episode. Congratulations, you've beaten Knee Deep In the Dead. The pit you talk about is actually the downbeat twist conclusion, and you aren't meant to survive it. However, because you were presumably playing on the easiest difficulty level, you weren't allowed to advance to episode two. Thus, the game restarted.

Issues 37-40, containing the complete guide to SNES *Doom*, are still available on back issue. I think you're going to need them.

Oddly enough, I did actually survive that pit one time by turning on the spot and firing rockets. I'd beaten the Barons with 200% health and armour practically intact, and before the screen faded I'd squelched everything moving and was still standing on 3% health. Never done it again, mind. There's a games-spud challenge for you.

Dear Zy,
I've just completed *Zelda III* (hurrah). But if you choose your character (with no.9 games it took you to complete it on him) you can go and fight Ganon again, why?
T. Bates, Worcester
Zy says:
Um... That's called a 'saved game'. Its very nature is to be unaffected by consequent events, so that you can restart from that point regardless. Are you similarly confused when re-reading a novel in which the hero dies at the end?

Dear Zy,
I have played *Killer Instinct* for a very long time and tried hard to make a slow motion combo come out, but it just does a normal combo. Can you please tell me an easy way to do it?
DT, Heron Unit, Feltham
Zy says:
The Spinal trick in SP42 (end any combo with F, F+1) was the easiest method I've been taught, but on the strength of the letters I suspect that many players are expecting more in the way of 'slo-mo'. They're not that much slower than usual, it's just an odd bug. You've probably already seen one and not been immediately impressed by its perverse nature. Take Spinal into practice mode and try a turbo combo (jump in, hold 3, 5, F, F+release 3) ad compare the sword flash to a slo-mo (jump in, 3, 5, F, F+1).

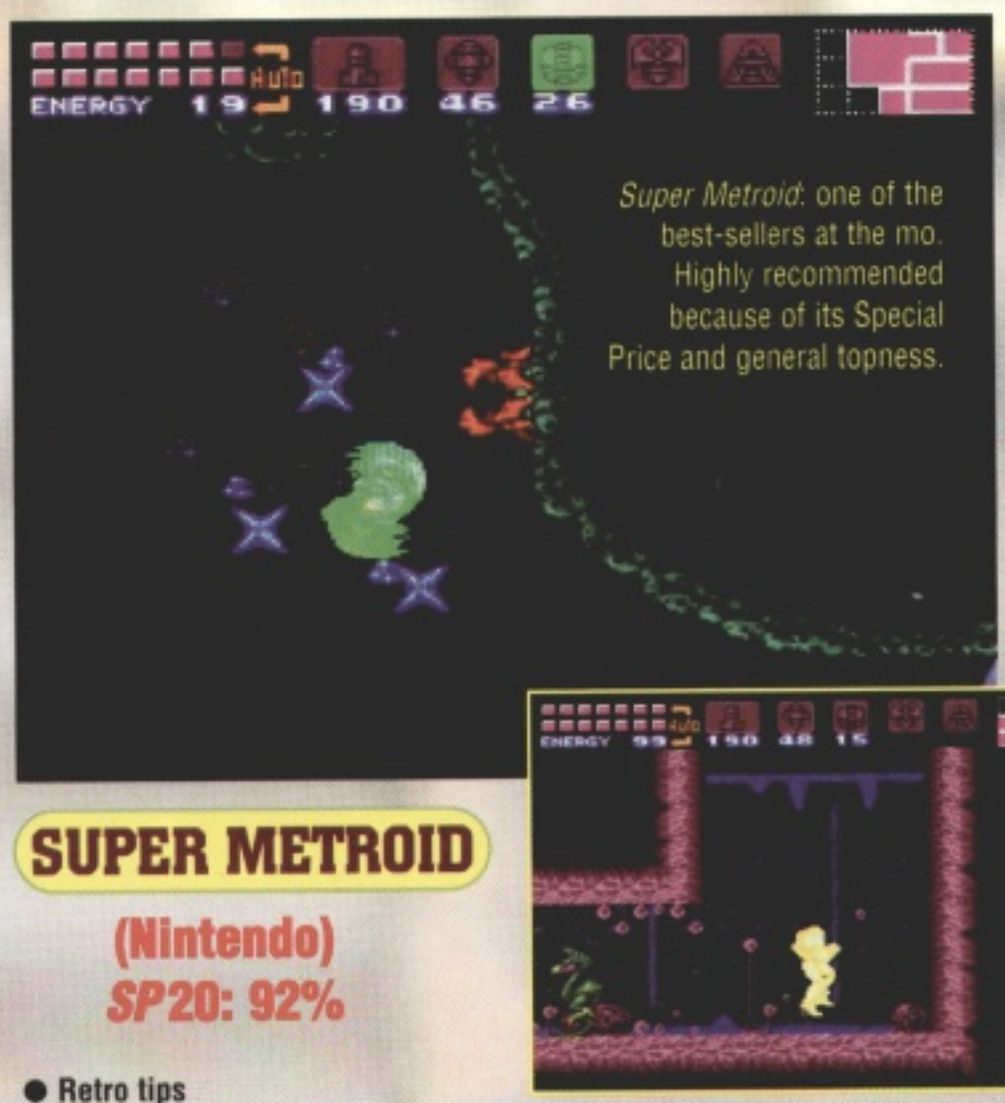

The *KI* slo-mo. Not very 'slo'?

LOST SOULS
Dear Zy,
I have managed to complete the master level on F-Zero after finishing expert level...

What I want to know is this: is it possible to complete the Death Wind 1 course in the Grand Prix with the Golden Fox car (which is on the Knight League) whilst having the master level enabled? Once the first three cars have built up their speed there seems to be no way of catching up with them if they pass you, which is more than likely.
Mark Thompson, Runcorn, Cheshire
Zy says:
As I haven't played it recently I can't automatically rule out your suggestion that it's impossible. On expert difficulty any good racing game ought to take your choice of vehicle more seriously and, as you mention in your letter, you can still complete that league without coming first on Death Wind 1. However, I find it hard to conceive of anything that some player somewhere can't solve (after sleepless nights of Coke and pizza, admittedly). So hey, I can use that handy cop-out of throwing it open to *Super Play* readers.

If you've fulfilled the terms of Mark's 'impossible' scenario, or you have the cart handy and feel a need to prove your gaming prowess, please write in to Mode 7 with some constructive advice on how he might achieve his obsessive goal.

Fairly trivial, perhaps, but we might just be able to save a man's sanity here.


Super Metroid: one of the best-sellers at the mo. Highly recommended because of its Special Price and general topness.

SUPER METROID
(Nintendo)
*SP*20: 92%

- **Retro tips**
- **General hints**

Sigh... We fell in love with *Super Metroid*, and a recent price cut has encouraged many of you to savour the quality game design that fair oozes from every pore. But it has its tough bits, and I've been inundated anew with pleas for help. We ran a player's guide in *SP23*, of course, but I'm told that's now out of print and thus no good to anyone: reprints not being our style, I thought I'd offer this little helper. It gives strong hints for all the common problems but if

DOOM
(Ocean)
*SP*36: 92%

- **Get the BFG9000**

After reading Patrick Salt's top-notch *Doom* bug in *SP41*, Ashley Turner went to work on getting hold of the BFG9000 through devious means. And what do you know, the resourceful fellow has gone and done it too. The method is remarkably similar. Following our player's guide (*SP37-40*), you should be able to acquire the chainsaw and chain gun on level 2 of episode 1. However, do not ever pick up a shotgun (indeed, you may have to actively avoid them at high difficulty levels). Use up all of the bullets in the pistol and a rocket launcher will appear in your hands. Again, safely dispose of both its high explosive rounds and the BFG9000 toaster will miraculously replace it. Heh, heh, heh.

Okay, so here's the bad news. You've got enough units of plasma energy to fire just ONE shot with it. From then on you must rely on your bare fist. This is an interesting bug, rather than a bona fide programmed cheat, after all. Who's laughing now, eh?

you're still having trouble then don't hesitate to get in touch again.

Mission Sequence

This list shows where you are and what you should be seeking next...

Morphing Ball upgrade, Crateria
Missiles acquired
Bombs acquired
[Charge Beam, Brinstar]
Spore Spawn mini-boss, Brinstar
Super Missiles acquired
Hi-Jump Boots upgrade, Norfair
[Spazer Beam, Brinstar]
Kraid boss, Brinstar
Varia Suit upgrade
Speed Booster upgrade, Norfair
Ice Beam acquired
Power Bombs acquired
Crocomire mini-boss, Norfair
Grappling Beam acquired
[Wave Beam, Norfair]
[X-Ray Scope, Brinstar]
Phantoon boss, Wrecked Ship
Gravity Suit upgrade
Botwoon mini-boss, Maridia
Draygon boss, Maridia
Space Jump upgrade
Plasma Beam acquired
Chozo mini-boss, Norfair
Screw Attack upgrade
Ridley boss, Norfair
Mother Brain boss, Tourian

Entries in square brackets indicate that the previous acquisition makes it accessible, although you may want to omit certain items for a record time.

Sticking Points

After getting the Speed Booster you can dash through those rapidly closing doors (top-left Norfair). Look for a tiny hole from which some orange insects emerge to find the Ice Beam.

Use the Ice Beam to turn enemies into temporary platforms and stepping stones. You need it to climb back up to Crateria.

Smash the glass tunnel (where you first glimpse Maridia) with a power bomb. Until you get the X-Ray Scope, power bombs are a handy tool for revealing destructible blocks and hidden stuff.

You'll come across two species of friendly aliens, the Etecoons and the Drachola, that can't be killed. Their purpose is to teach you, by demonstration, some new techniques with your existing power-ups. Imitate them to escape from their lairs. You can actually rescue them at the end of the game by going to the room where you first found the Bomb. Blast out the wall on the right to let them escape, scarper, then watch their ship leaving the planet with yours.

To quick fix Draygon, let yourself be picked up and use the grappling beam to touch one of the broken glass domes on either wall (you can smash them with a Super Missile). She'll absorb most of the electrical discharge.

Found a Chozo statue with nothing in its hand? What an ideal resting place for your morphing ball form...

Metroid Larvae are easily dispatched with the grappling beam.

Bomb Hopping

The technique of rapidly dropping bombs with such precise timing that you climb vertically on the force of each successive blast. An auto-fire pad works, but most of us are stuck with hammering the buttons in perfect rhythm.

Power Bomb Attacks

Select the power bomb as your weapon and equip your main gun with the charge and just one other kind of beam. Charge up your gun for a new kind of attack. Each use costs one power bomb.

Energy Recharge

To perform this your energy must be under 50 units (with no reserves) and you should possess at least 10 missiles, 10 bombs, and 11 power bombs. Morph into a ball, hold L + R + down on the D-Pad, then detonate a power bomb and keep that button held with the others until AFTER the explosion has ended.

Maximum Gear

14 Energy Pods
4 Reserve Tanks
230 Missiles
50 Super Missiles
50 Power Bombs

I've never managed to obtain the 5 Missiles encased in rock that sit on Dash Blocks high above the Maridia/Brinstar glass tunnel. How do you build up enough speed below to get those?

Endings

The ending you see varies with the time on the clock of your saved game. Examining the map doesn't cut into this time.

9.00 plus Samus gives a thumbs aloft, somersaults away and fires.

3.00-8:59 Takes off her helmet first too.

2.59 less For heaven's sake, woman!

OVER 260 GAMES REVIEWED AND RATED

WHAT CART

Yet another guise for the love it, loathe it, just can't live without it What Cart. This time with quick guide smileys to make it easier to sort the wheat from the chaff. Use it wisely and make your SNES happy.

3D BASEBALL	Jaleco SP19 63%	Loaded to the gills with Japanese text, making it difficult to tell what's going on. (Unless you're Japanese, obv.)
100% COTTON	Datam Polystar SP21 79%	Content trades off to style in this great-looking scrolling shoot-'em-up starring a broomstick-riding witch.
90 MINUTES	Ocean SP39 55%	Disappointing footy title that pales in the face of competition from *FIFA '96* and (especially) *ISSD*.
AAAHH!!! REAL MONSTERS	Viacom SP38 65%	A marginally entertaining three-character platformer that's worth a laugh if you can pick it up at a budget price.
ADDAMS FAMILY VALUES	Ocean SP31 75%	An open exploration game, featuring plenty of Wandering About™ and Getting Bored™.
ALCAHEST	Halken/Square SP18 69%	Taking *Zelda* and making it harder must've looked good on paper. The execution is uninspired if competent.
ANDRE AGASSI TENNIS	Techmagic SP22 52%	Agassi might be able to pull Brooke Shields but his SNES game is crappy. Not a patch on *Super Tennis*, of course.
ANIMANIACS	Konami SP26 28%	Jon Nash said of this game: "Less a clever game based on a funny cartoon, more a grindingly tedious disaster." Ouch.
ARDY LIGHTFOOT	Titus SP29 83%	A My First Platformer with cutesy graphics and predictable gameplay making it "fine for the young 'uns".
ASTRO GO! GO!	Meldac SP20 51%	Amusing, *F-Zero* clone which reviewer Jon Davies disliked but of which Tony said "wasn't that bad actually."
BASSIN'S BLACK BASS	Hot B SP34 65%	An original, relaxing, and surprisingly deep (sorry) fishing game. Yup, we said fishing game
BATMAN FOREVER	Acclaim SP36 61%	A humourless, soulless game designed merely to fill boxes marked 'Batman Forever'. Nice soundtrack, though.
BATTLE CARS	Namco SP19 73%	Listen: weak two-player modes spoil racing games. And this Mad Max-esque effort has a very grotty one indeed.
BATTLE PINBALL	Banpresto SP34 68%	Pinball meets computer game designers and comes off worse. Bright colours don't make up for poor gameplay.
BEAUTY AND THE BEAST	Hudson Soft SP23 71%	Lord knows how Hudson got the licence for a Disney game, but here it is and it's both pretty-looking and pretty dull.
BEAVIS AND BUTTHEAD	Viacom SP36 39%	"This sucks my butt." "Yeah – ahuh – butt – ahuh huh." A truly offensive scrolly platformy beat-'em-uppy thing.
BIG HURT BASEBALL	Acclaim SP39 70%	A neat and tidy version of baseball with motion-captured graphics. But B-A-S-E-B-A-L-L? Give us *ISSD* any day.
BIKER MICE FROM MARS	Konami SP31 71%	It tries so desperately to be *Rock 'n' Roll Racing* but fails on gameplay points. (The tacky Snickers license doesn't help.)
BLACKHAWK	Interplay SP27 76%	Pretender to the *Flashback* throne. Please, take careful note of the word 'pretender'.
BONKERS	Capcom SP27 74%	Cute platform fun. Can you say "kill the cute thing"? Like the cartoon with sub-Animaniacs film lampoons.
BOOGERMAN	Interplay SP32 56%	Another. Tedious. Platform. Game. The novelty of super-powered farts and burps soon wears wafer thin.
BRAIN LORD	Enix SP25 81%	Decent action RPG with some entertaining puzzly bits. It looks a bit wonky when compared to *Zelda III*, obviously.
BRANDISH	Koei SP34 53%	More below-par RPG antics from the masters of under-par tat. Action-heavy *Soulblazer* wannabe, with nob graphics.
BREATH OF FIRE	Capcom SP24 80%	The *Super Play* cover was better than the game, but it remains an absorbing, if repetitious on occasion, RPG. Hmm.
BREATH OF FIRE 2	Capcom SP41 81%	Although it has undeniable flaws, if you're a hardcore pointy-hat *BOF2* is an essential purchase.

BUGS BUNNY RABBIT RAMPAGE	Sunsoft SP19 58%	You'll have a hoot picking out the Looney Tunes characters in here, but the platforminess around them spoils the fun.
CANNON FODDER	Virgin SP28 89%	We don't really like Amiga games on *Super Play*, but this is one exception. Topper action-based wargaming all the way.
CARAVAN SHOOTING COLLECTION	Hudson Soft SP37 52%	A collection of old coin-ops converted in such a fashion that you'll believe your SNES is in fact an 8-bit machine.
CARRIER ACES	Gametek SP34 39%	Japanese kamikaze pilots would be insulted by this. (If they hadn't all killed themselves.)
CASTLEVANIA: VAMPIRE'S KISS	Konami SP35 80%	Not as good as the original, but it does its best to replicate doses of that classic 'Vania playability.
CHAMPIONS WORLD CLASS SOCCER	Acclaim SP19 66%	Endorsed by Ryan Giggs (in the days he could play), this is a typically below-par 'soccer' game from the States.
CHARLES BARKLEY SHUT UP AND JAM!	Sony SP28 73%	Sony Imagesoft Shut Up and Write a Proper Basketball game, more like...
CHOPLIFTER III	Ocean SP18 80%	Blatantly riding the retro wave, Beam (*Shadowrun*) Software's shoot-'em-up sequel is limited but dreamy fun.
CHRONO TRIGGER	Square SP37 90%	A paperback RPG to Square's *Final Fantasy* hardback epic. Wil loves it, of course, but then he loves everything RPG-ish.
CIVILISATION	Koei SP41 88%	Proof that appearances really can be deceptive. A totally absorbing, but very complicated game.
CLAYFIGHTER 2	Interplay SP28 87%	A pretty beat-'em-up that is, unfortunately, a total gimmick from start to finish. (Can't wait to see the M2 version, arf!)
COLLEGE SLAM	Acclaim SP44 79%	If you own *NBA Jam*, avoid. If not, this certainly improves on the Jam formula. Bonkers and far too addictive.
CUTTHROAT ISLAND	Acclaim SP42 66%	Fair to middling scrolling slash-'em-up that tries to incorporate new ideas, but falls a little flat.
DEATH AND RETURN OF SUPERMAN	Sunsoft SP25 29%	Licence + scrolling beat-'em-up = dreadful tat. Supey would turn in his grave. Or would he? We haven't a clue, frankly.
DEMOLITION MAN	Acclaim SP36 75%	An inventive, unpredictable licence platformer. What? Yeah, Tony recommends the zip-lines level. Oh he's so ker-razeee.
DEMON'S BLAZON	Capcom SP27 80%	Show-stopping graphics and a great bulging sack full of neat touches in a game that's a teeny bit too easy.
DIRT RACER SFX	Elite SP31 51%	A Super FX racing game and a pretty grim one at that. Not as good as this next feller...
DIRT TRAX FX	Acclaim SP38 77%	Sculptured Software go Super FX potty once more to produce a natty motah-biking racer which lacks depth.
DONKEY KONG COUNTRY	Nintendo SP27 90%	Ray-traced platform Kong fun that everyone got for Christmas, learning about gameplay/graphics the hard way.
DIDDY'S KONG QUEST	Nintendo SP40 82%	A better game than the original, but not to an extent that would warrant an improved score – could do better.
DOOM	Ocean SP36 92%	It is, as they say, *Doom* – but on the SNES. Most of the PC original's levels and features are present and correct.
DOUBLE DRAGON V	Tradewest SP25 39%	The first *Double Dragon* game was quite good. In the arcades. But part five on the SNES? Just look at the score.
DRAGON	Virgin SP21 88%	More a clone of old beat-'em-ups such as *IK+* than *SFII*, and therefore not as enjoyable. Playable enough, though.
DRAGON BALL Z 2	Bandai SP17 75%	Though the score suggests an above average game, looking back on *DBZ2* it's little more than a dull, quirky beat-'em-up.
DRAGON BALL Z 3	Bandai SP27 70%	*DBZ3* is to *DBZ2* what *DBZ2* was to *DBZ1*. Got that? Er, the series got better as it went on, but never brilliant.
DRAGON VIEW	Kemco SP35 68%	An infuriatingly entertaining RPG awash with compounded minor flaws. Bit of a love it/bear it-type scenario, we reckon.
EARTHBOUND	Nintendo SP35 88%	A crude-looking but startlingly different and entertaining RPG set in childhood America. We'll love it forever.
EARTHWORM JIM	Virgin SP29 91%	He hasn't got a leg to stand on and he's got no backbone (Dis-flaming-missed! – Ed), but he's in a very fine platformer.
EARTHWORM JIM 2	Virgin SP39 85%	An excellent sequel albeit with perhaps fewer surprises on offer than that of the original Jimmer.
ESPN SPEED WORLD	Sony SP28 60%	A depressingly dull racer, despite apparently having more options than God.
EXCITE STAGE '95	Epoch SP34 77%	An improvement over the original ES, but not one we'd recommend with the likes of *ISSD* and *FIFA* around.
EYE OF THE BEHOLDER	Capcom SP21 52%	Poor first-person-viewed *Dungeon Master* sequel which incurred the Mighty Wrath of the Zyster when he reviewed it.
FATAL FURY 2	Takara SP19 79%	Tired by its desperate strivance for membership of the *SFII* Club, Zy rightly judged this to be lacking that certain spark.
FEVER PITCH	US Gold SP32 78%	A passable, meat-and-potatoes footy game. It's supposed to have a humorous twist, but we're buggered if we saw it.
FIFA	Electronic Arts SP20 89%	An enormous hit on the Mega Drive, this SNES conversion is an accurate one. Looking rather dated these days.
FIFA '96	Electronic Arts SP37 84%	So what do yez get fer yer '96-ness? Better graphics, tiny speech samples and some new options. Is that enough?
FIGHTER'S HISTORY	Data East SP22 85%	Blatant 'homage' to *SFII* and instigator of the famous Capcom vs Data East lawsuit. A very proficient clone in fact.
FINAL STRETCH	LOZC SP19 73%	Obscure F1 racing affair which boasted a DSP chip in order to calculate some clever 3D-esque views of the action.
FINAL FANTASY III	Square SP26 95%	Truly a God among RPGs, making yer average SNES title look about as appealing as an evening with Terry Wogan.
FINAL FIGHT 2	Capcom SP10 75%	A bit of a disappointment all round, really. A great scrolling beat-'em-up, but nothing we haven't seen before, and too easy.
FINAL FIGHT TOUGH	Capcom SP43 49%	Same old gameplay, but the challenge is a travesty. Capcom have become sloppy in their old age and need a slap.
THE FIREMEN	Human SP29 75%	A tricky squirt-'em-up that's taxing if not all that original. Run round, *Ghoul Patrol*-style, extinguish fires and rescue folk.
THE FLINTSTONES	Taito SP20 54%	The plan: nick some bits from Mario and stick 'em together for our own game. The result: a tired, challengeless example.
FOREMAN FOR REAL	Acclaim SP37 40%	A licence with slick graphics and precious little in the way of gameplay. Fatty should sit down and shut up.
FRANTIC FLEA	Gametek SP39 29%	Painfully, nay, excruciatingly annoying platformer albeit with nattily produced graphics.
FRONT MISSION	Square SP31 88%	Isometric turn-based strategy wargame with enough pace and action to make a two-hour battle just fly by.
FRONT MISSION: GUN HAZARD	Square SP43 45%	Fun Hazard more like. Devoid of action, tactics, playability or challenge. This is the Dusty Bin of mecha gaming.

FULL THROTTLE RACING	Gametek SP26 55%	Pretty grim racing game offering a weird mix of Mode 7 jetskiing and traditional motorbiking action.
GHOUL PATROL	JVC SP30 82%	Not up to the standard of its prequel, *Zombies Ate My Neighbours*, but pretty close. Good B-movie-parody fun.
GANBARE GOEMON (MYSTICAL NINJA)	Konami SP?? ??%	xx
GANBARE GOEMON 2	Konami SP17 90%	Sequel to groundbreaking *Legend Of Mystical Ninja* with a heavier action slant but all its playability and charm.
GANBARE GOEMON 4	Konami SP41 82%	While showing signs of age, *Goeman 4* nevertheless provides an Aladdin's Cave of 'only in Japan' videogaming.
HAGANE	Virgin SP32 74%	A surprise UK release, this platform actioner from Hudson Soft is very Japanese, and entertaining and tough with it.
HAMMERIN' HARRY	Irem SP23 77%	If we had a hammer we'd hammer all over this game for not living up to what was expected from it. Oh yes.
HARDBALL 3	Accolade SP24 69%	Let's make another baseball game! Let's make it similar to the others! Let's get the general thumbs-down from *Super Play*!
HEBEREKE'S POPOON	Sunsoft SP27 84%	Addictive *Puyo*-twist with mad fings. What's a popoon? What's going on with the seemingly random features?
HUMANS	Gametek SP18 70%	Uses one of the worst dreign approaches possible, the blatant rip-off (*Lemmings*) and stumbles along determinedly.
HUNGRY DINOSAURS	Sunsoft SP40 35%	Has all the visual hallmarks of a classic puzzler, but just doesn't cut it. Mildly entertaining.
ILLUSION OF GAIA	Enix SP26 88%	Well-produced pseudo-sequel to *Soulblazer* with a great atmosphere to boot. Far from very challenging, though.
INDIANA JONES	JVC SP30 29%	A grim platform exploration affair which embodies everything that's wrong with licensed games.
INSPECTOR GADGET	Nintendo SP18 71%	Yes, Nintendo did release this – perhaps they were short on products, 'cos this is a less than glorious platformer.
INTERNATIONAL SUPERSTAR SOCCER	Konami SP30 92%	Blimey! A soccer game that scores over 75%! Great dynamic sprites and quick action make this highly enjoyable.
ISS DELUXE	Konami SP38 94%	Improved over the original in just about every single respect, this goes to prove Konami's continued mastery of the SNES.
JAMES POND 3	US Gold SP32 77%	A Mario rip-off which came along about two years too late. It has its clever bits but feels like a clone from start to finish.
JELLY BOY	Ocean SP25 61%	Frustrating platformer whose selling-point is that your character can morph into different objects. Yawn…
THE JETSONS	Taito SP23 76%	The sort of platformer that Tony was always lumbered with. This had one or two pleasant surprises in store, though.
JIM POWER	Electrobrain SP23 70%	Imagine the most garish European-produced Amiga game possible with a clever 3D glasses bit. That's JP alright.
JOE AND MAC 2	Data East SP21 80%	The graphics are jolly, by jingo, and the jungly caperings entertaining, but… there's… something… missing.
THE JUNGLE BOOK	Virgin SP21 82%	One of two jungle-based platformers dumped on Tony in issue 21. Blimey, we were terrible to him in those days.
JUNGLE STRIKE	Electronic Arts SP33 83%	Nothing new for *Desert Strike* fans, but a worthy alternative for the rest of us. (Tony hates the series, for what it matters.)
JURASSIC PARK 2	Sony SP27 83%	A tough, varied game with a shade too much standard platforminess to make it a classic.
JUSTICE LEAGUE	Acclaim SP34 30%	A dreadfully implemented, poorly planned and unplayable beat-'em-up. Why do these things get made?
KID KLOWN IN CRAZY CHASE	Kemco SP27 80%	If the entire game was up to the standard of its graphics (they're brill), this would be a classic game. They're aren't.
KICK OFF 3	Anco/Imagineer SP20 91%	Did you know that Anco comes from ANil Gupta (its MD) Company? You didn't? We overrated this one incidentally.
KIKIKAIKAI	Natsume SP5 82%	Underneath the perilously weird exterior lurks a really enjoyable two-player shoot-'em-up with superb graphics and a large playing area.
KIKIKAIKAI 2	Natsume SP23 79%	The sort of game that'll always find a place on our cover, this is fun, very Japanese, but too much like its predecessor.
KILLER INSTINCT	Nintendo SP36 80%	Not arcade perfect, of course not, but a conversion that totally captures the essence of the original. Surely the last word in side-on beat-'em-ups.
KILLER INSTINCT 2 COIN-OP	Midway/Nintendo SP43 91%	A stunner in every sense. If all sequels were this much improved, the world would be a better place.
KING OF THE MONSTERS 2	Takara SP17 74%	Neo Geo conversion which sets Godzilla-esque monsters against one another in varied settings. Very limited action.
KIRBY'S AVALANCHE	Nintendo/Compile SP33 91%	*Puyo Puyo* finally goes west in the form of the pink blobster. One of the most addictive and downright fun games ever.
KIRBY'S TEA SHOP	Nintendo SP28 86%	Er, sorry, that's Tee Shot, actually. It's an odd little golf-type game for odd little gamesplaying people.
KIRBY SUPER DELUXE	Nintendo SP44 89%	Slick, colourful and addictive with a difficulty curve just the wrong side of easy. Another platform masterpiece.
KNIGHTS OF THE ROUND	Capcom SP21 51%	One of the games which started asking questions of Capcom's output, this is a very run-of-the-mill scrolly slasher.
LEGEND	Seika SP22 55%	Slick but dull slasher. (So baffled, was the designer, by its score that he felt the need to visit us and say so.
LEMMINGS 2	Psygnosis SP26 88%	Repeatedly kill even more cute (or rather save) little fluffy creatures in yet more interesting ways.
LESTER THE UNLIKELY	Nintendo SP18 52%	Another unlikely (yeah, sorry) Nintendo release that had all the charm of a spent teabag.
LETHAL ENFORCERS	Konami SP17 69%	Top Reservoir Dogsage awaits in this conversion of Konami's exciting but short-lived coin-op blaster.
LIBERTY OR DEATH	Koei SP22 41%	Why does Zy do it? Another wargame that withered and wilted under his unflinching glare.
THE LION KING	Virgin SP29 82%	A polished, if not all that innovative platform licence of a film who's name eludes us.
LODERUNNER TWIN	T&E Soft SP24 55%	Such potential. Such lack of the finer points of gameplay. Ex-editor James Leach didn't go a packet on this platformer.
LORD OF THE RINGS	Interplay SP29 52%	A huge, detailed, wandering game ruined by gaping gameplay gaffs. (Some of the music's quite nice, though.)
LUFIA AND THE FORTRESS OF DOOM	Taito SP18 79%	If Japanese-produced RPGs work to a template then Lufia exemplifies it. While generally sound its sooo predictable.
MADDEN NFL '95	Electronic Arts SP26 84%	Nothing's really changed since *Madden '94*, which isn't really a bad thing, of course. (Er, so long as you enjoyed it.)
MAGIC BOY	JVC SP21 75%	Lacks the finesse of its Japanese counterparts but has a fair stab at shaking some puzzly platformy stuff.

MARIO'S TIME MACHINE	Mindscape SP17 60%	One of the only 'edutainment' titles on the SNES. Hardly surprising, really: gamers want to be entertained not taught.
MARIO'S PICROSS	Nintendo SP39 77%	Quirky puzzler based on the theme of considered deduction. Chipping away pictures has never been, well, done, actually.
MARY SHELLEY'S FRANKENSTEIN	Sony SP28 69%	Well she isn't pretty, but… there's no need to be personal. Bad platformer of an okay film of an excellent book.
THE MASK	T•HQ SP38 70%	Marginally shallow platform licence fun. Morphs a-plenty ensure variety if not thrills.
MECHWARRIOR 3050	Activision SP28 77%	Power-crazed destruction on two legs, with some stunning animation but a depressingly short lifespan.
MEGA-LO-MANIA	Imagineer SP19 81%	Engrossing wargame that endeared itself to the Leachster for some reason. Impressive use of speech though.
MEGA MAN 7	Capcom SP38 79%	A reasonable update of the NES and Game Boy instalments of the series, which lacks the spark needed to make it shine.
MEGA MAN X	Capcom SP17 88%	A fine spin-off from the NES games, which dated horribly upon the release of Nintendo's far superior *Super Metroid*.
MEGA MAN X2	Capcom SP30 80%	Loaded with Capcom's C-4 co-processor, we expected more from *X2*. It's merely more of the same with a couple of frills.
MEGA MAN X3	Capcom SP42 70%	Capcom are cashing in. It's a good game, but there are none of the new ideas we were hoping for in part two.
METAL MARINES	Namcot/Mindscape SP18 80%	Turn-based isometric-viewed other-hyphenated-stuff wargame which proves a lot more shallow than expected.
MICHAEL JORDAN	Electronic Arts SP29 83%	A platform game based on basketball. The expected ice hockey flight sim sequel never appeared, strangely.
MICKEY'S MAGICAL QUEST	Capcom SP3 89%	Super-slick platformer with graphics to make a mess over. What a pity that it's all over so soon.
MICKEY AND MINNIE	Capcom SP27 73%	We don't understand the release of this – apart from having a two-player mode it's almost identical to *MMQ*. (and easier).
MICKEY MANIA	Sony SP26 87%	There've been few technically stunning SNES games to come out of the UK, but this is one. Plays fine, looks amazing.
MICKEY'S ULTIMATE CHALLENGE	Hi-Tech SP20 54%	One for the younger viewers, as Hi-Tech would be sure to claim. Simple platform bits give way to tedious mind games.
MICRO MACHINES	Sony SP26 83%	An overhead racer that looks bad, sounds awful, but plays wonderfully. Shame about the presentation.
MICRO MACHINES 2	Ocean SP39 88%	A great big fat extra wodge of what made the original such a superlative racer. Some of the tracks will drive you nuts.
MORTAL KOMBAT 2	Acclaim SP24 90%	Realising their grave error, Acclaim brought just about everything across from the coin-op in this sequel. It's fun.
MORTAL KOMBAT 3	Acclaim SP37 85%	A well-balanced coin-op conversion that would have benefitted from a tad more attention to detail.
MR TUFF	Ocean SP32 74%	A few more sprites fall into Ocean's platform game machine. A squirrel, though… why?
MUSCLE BOMBER	Capcom SP22 78%	Enormously entertaining wrestling game (in the short term), with skill four-player mode and great graphics.
NBA GIVE 'N' GO	Konami SP38 85%	Arcade-style b-ball title using a clever mix of Mode 7 and jumbo-sized sprites. Not quite as much fun as *NBA Jam*.
NBA JAM TOURNAMENT EDITION	Acclaim SP30 90%	A few well-placed tweaks on the superb original, *NBA Jam*. Fast, and even more arcadey –top for two players.
NBA LIVE '95	Electronic Arts SP26 84%	A good basketball game that calls for a fair bit of hoop-shooting skill.
NBA LIVE '96	Electronic Arts SP37 78%	Good basketball fun, but this is more of a sim and not up to *NBA Jam*'s hoop-burning standards.
NEW HORIZONS	Koei SP28 62%	"Normal people should flee in terror." Said Zy to this poor sea-bound strategy sleep-inducer.
NEWMAN-HAAS INDY	Acclaim SP27 73%	Non-mode 7 racer! Nigel Mansell! Dagen Haas? Pretty good car sim of Formula One's boring US cousin.
NFL QUARTERBACK	Acclaim SP40 89%	Boasting more depth than *Madden* and now significantly Club '96 improved both on the field and presentation-wise.
NHL '94	Electronic Arts SP22 89%	For some reasons, ice hockey is one of the easiest sports to make into a playable game, something this game proves ably.
NHL '96	Electronic Arts SP37 90%	NHL gets better every year, but this isn't a viable replacement for *NHL '95* owners.
NHL STANLEY CUP	Nintendo SP18 79%	Before doing *Doom* for Williams, Sculptured did this Mode 7-mad ice hockey sim for Nintendo. And it ain't bad.
NOSFERATU	Seika SP27 75%	The banana peel was replaced with a severe lack of originality. The game still tripped over it."
OBELIX	Infogrames SP36 60%	Average. Run-of-the-mill. Boring. Flawed. True to the looks of the original Asterix books, enlivened by okay sub-games.
OPERATION EUROPE	Koei SP24 46%	If you bought your SNES to play wargames then you might squeeze something out of this. Don't bother otherwise.
OGRE BATTLE	Enix SP34 80%	A fantasy strategy game that's fun if not altogether varied, but employs a solid real-time feature.
PAC-ATTACK	Namco SP21 69%	It didn't take long for the *Puyo Puyo* clones to begin arriving and this is a spot-on example of how to not get it quite right.
PAC-MAN 2	Namco SP35 70%	A frustrating, picky platform game that's nearly good enough to get away with it.
PANEL DE PON	Nintendo SP43 90%	Brimming with options, heady with playability and steeped in challenge – this turns minutes into hours into days.
PARODIUS 3	Konami SP41 83%	As slick as ever and truly funny in places, but nothing innovative. Just timeless blasting gameplay.
THE PAGEMASTER	Virgin SP29 61%	Oh please, someone mess up that Culkin kid's face. Speccy kid with books in pointless platformer.
PHANTOM 2040	Viacom SP38 78%	Pacing, storyline and depth drag this licence platformer out of the 60% band.
PGA TOUR '96	T•HQ SP42 85%	Lots of options, plenty of holes and a steep learning curve make for a top notch simulation.
PINBALL DREAMS	Tecmagik SP17 76%	What should have been a greatly-improved version of the Amiga hit turned out to be shoddily implemented and flawed.
PINK GOES TO HOLLYWOOD	Activision SP27 79%	A bit of a mystery release, this, considering The Pink Panther went out with flares (again). Lightweight, floaty platform fun.
POWER DRIVE	Namco SP35 70%	A bad Amiga mini-racing game makes its way to the SNES. Nobody cheers.
POPULOUS 2	Imagineer SP23 87%	What is it with Imagineer and God-type games? Another of those Great-If-You-Like-That-Sort-Of-Thing™s.

PORKY PIG'S HAUNTED HOLIDAY	Acclaim SP40 72%	A simple, formulaic platformer for kids that doesn't pretend to be anything else.
PRIMAL RAGE	Time Warner SP36 60%	An average conversion of an average arcade beat-'em-up. With big dinosaurs.
P.T.O. II	Koei SP44 25%	Takes one of the most interesting episodes in history and makes it slightly less interesting than sorting tax returns.
PUTTY SQUAD	Ocean SP32 89%	Be like this, other platform games. Being, literally, putty, your character can do things other platform heroes can't.
PUZZLE BOBBLE	Taito SP34 84%	Like all great puzzle games this is a simple idea which is especially fun in two-player mode.
REN AND STIMPY: TIME WARP	THQ SP28 51%	Say this:"Steeempy, you eediot! You wrote a dull scrollingbeeeat-'em-up!" and avoid this awful offering.
REVOLUTION X	Acclaim SP41 45%	It belongs in an arcade where you can blast away for ten minutes and then play something else.
RACCOON RASCAL	NCS/Masiya SP21 79%	Obscure puzzler starring arguably the cutest critter to ever appear in a game. Especially fun in two-player mode.
RAINBOW BELL ADVENTURES	Konami SP18 70%	The score's perhaps a little harsh on this distinctive two-player platformer, but it's nonetheless below-par Konami.
RANMA 1/2: HARD BATTLE	Rumic Soft SP21 79%	All the Ranma faves are present in what proves to be a rewarding beat-'em-up. Still some way short of *SFII*, mind.
RISE OF THE PHOENIX	Koei SP32 46%	A trudging historical battle strategy game that's inaccurate historically and as a representation of war strategies.
RISE OF THE ROBOTS	Acclaim SP29 33%	One of the most expensive, over-hyped disappointments since, erm, the last one. Over-rated at 33%.
ROBOTREK	Enix SP31 72%	A polished but unoriginal RPG, just like too many games to come out of Enix. The robot-manufacturing bit is clever.
ROMANCE OF THE 3 KINGDOMS III	Koei SP20 67%	And still the Zyster played insipid Koei wargames, finding this particular example suited solely to hardcore anorak fans.
ROMANCE OF THE 3 KINGDOMS V	Koei SP37 68%	Armchair anorak strategy that could be a lot better and frankly involves little romance.
SAMURAI SPIRITS	Takara SP28 84%	A beat-'em-up that isn't quite as diverse as you'd expect from a 24meg game.
SEA QUEST DSV	T•HQ SP30 74%	A shoot-cum-swim-cum-budget-'em-up. Though underwater thrills may work okay on the telly, they don't here.
SECRET OF EVERMORE	Square SP39 81%	A fine action RPG whose faults come horribly to light if you've played *Mana*.
SECRET OF THE STARS	Tecmo SP44 43%	This is a bog-standard Japanese RPG that only die-hard fans will get anything out of.
SEPARATION ANXIETY	Acclaim SP40 58%	A plodding, directionless scrolling beat-'em-up that's fun in two-player mode, but does Spidey few favours.
SINK OR SWIM	Titus SP31 55%	Repetitive *Lemmings*-style save-'em-up that's about as interesting as a Sunday afternoon on the Mary Celeste.
SMASH BALL	Charactersoft SP23 82%	"The Surprise Two-Player Breakout Clone Hit Of '95!" as our pals on TOTAL! might say. This is a fabby little thing.
THE SMURFS	Infogrames SP25 80%	Challenging platform game stuffed to overflowing with little scary blue people who smile too much.
SOCCER KID	Ocean SP18 84%	A daft idea it might be, but this is entertaining stuff (despite looking like so many typical Amiga games of the day).
SOCCER SHOOTOUT	Capcom SP24 80%	While hardly mould-breaking, the Western version of *Excite Stage '94* is a playable silicon take on The Beautiful Game.
SOLDIERS OF FORTUNE	Spectrum Holobyte SP18 89%	Zy thinks this is fabbage, while Tony believes it to be nothing special at all. Essentially it's *Gauntlet* for the '90s.
SPACE ACE	Empire SP17 58%	Oh dear, another game that got us into 'trouble' because we gave it a mediocre score. Sorry, Empire, but this is nobby.
SPACE INVADERS	Taito SP21 40%	Space Invaders. Space Invaders. Space Invaders. Space Invaders. Space Invaders. Space Invaders. Space Invaders.
SPARKSTER	Konami SP25 89%	It's an original, imaginative, entertaining, and fun platformer. Blimey!
SPAWN	Acclaim SP40 56%	Just the sort of game you'll ponder over and then walk away from when it's skulking in the bargain bins for a tenner.
SPECTRE	Gametek SP21 90%	Horrendously overrated (even EMAP mags slagged it off) two-player polygonised tank combat game. 72% more like!
SPEED RACER	Accolade SP22 65%	Did we ever tell you about the difficulty we had getting a review copy from Accolade? Were they scared of us?
SPIDERMAN	Acclaim SP31 77%	A rather linear but pleasing platformer featuring our arachnid ally.
SPIDERMAN & THE X-MEN	Acclaim SP22 72%	Tatty-looking platform beat-'em-up which fails to make best use of those soupy Marvel characters.
SPIKE MCFANG	Bulletproof SP24 82%	Call us suckers for invention, but we couldn't resist Spike and his hat-luzzing action RPG antics, however short-lived.
SPORTS ILLUSTRATED CHAMPIONSHIP	Malibu SP19 70%	This two-games-on-one-cart (American footy and baseball) package was a nice idea, but poorly realised.
STAR TREK BRIDGE SIM	Interplay SP29 77%	A stunted, unenjoyable Trekker game, with the saving grace of being fairly well executed.
STAR TREK: THE NEXT GENERATION	Spectrum Holobyte SP21 39%	Lots of pitiful subgames cobbled together to form something that even the saddest Trekker would struggle to enjoy.
STARGATE	Acclaim SP32 60%	Good films make mediocre games. Atrocious films make... oh dear.
STREET RACER	Ubi-Soft SP25 91%	A *Mario Kart*-style racer that pips its predecessor to the post. Odd split-screen four-player mode.
SUPER BATTLETANK 2	Absolute SP19 43%	Military hardware fetishist Cam Winstanley reviewed this in *Super Play* and even he was distinctly non-plussed with it.
SUPER BOMBERMAN 3	Hudson Soft SP37 89%	Excellent new multi-player and single-player touches keep The Most Addictive Game Ever™ going strong.
SUPER CHASE HQ	Taito SP19 55%	Loosely based on the coin-op of a similar name, this is strictly Mode 7 racing by numbers. Hugely disappointing stuff.
SUPER CUP SOCCER 2	Jaleco SP19 60%	If we had a tenner for all the weak footy games like this, we'd be at the pub now, not writing about them.
SUPER DRIFT OUT	Visco SP34 45%	An overhead racing game that, despite a course designer, is much too dull.
SUPER DROPZONE	Eurocom SP26 87%	It's *Defender* all over again! Actually, it's *Dropzone* all over again, but that all amounts to the same thing.
SUPER GODZILLA	Toho SP25 39%	Dreadful and boring stomp-'em-up. Destroy cities. Fight monsters. Don't buy this game.

SUPER ICE HOCKEY	Sunsoft SP24 55%	Like so many 'Super'-suffixed games, this fails to do the term any justice. But then Average Ice Hockey would be a bit silly.
SUPER INTERNATIONAL CRICKET	Nintendo SP33 77%	That obvious problem of cricket not working on a computer shines through.
SUPER MARIO RPG	Nintendo/Square SP44 81%	A short, cute and extremely simplistic introduction to roleplaying by Nintendo's most famous character.
SUPER METROID	Nintendo SP20 92%	This is the reason Gumpei Yokoi still holds his head high after the disappointing Virtual Boy. Buy this game. Buy two copies.
SUPER MORPH	Sony SP30 86%	Intriguing puzzle-orientated fun straight from the Amiga. The hero morphs between states in a platform adventure.
SUPER NINJA KUN	Jaleco SP25 68%	A pretty, occasionally enjoyable game that plays like the Encyclopedia Britannica.
SUPER PINBALL: BEHIND THE MASK	Meldac SP19 73%	"Tony, would you like to review this nice-looking but dull pinball sim?" "No, but no other bugger's going to...".
SUPER PUNCH OUT!!	Nintendo SP27 90%	Original and surprisingly top boxing game! Cartoony looks and plenty of skills needed to overcome a variety of opponents.
SUPER RETURN OF THE JEDI	JVC SP30 79%	A huge but repetitive platformer just like so many others. Despite faithful graphics the film's atmosphere isn't recreated.
SUPER STREET FIGHTER II	Capcom SP23 96%	Although most SNES-owning hardcore *SF* enthusiasts prefer *Turbo*, this remains one hell of a beat-'em-up.
SUPER TROLL ISLANDS	Gametek SP20 70%	Jon Nash said of this game: "Less a clever game based on a funny cartoon, more a grindingly tedious disaster." Ouch.
SUPER TURRICAN	Ocean SP31 84%	A short journey into the depths of a classic floppy title, with more besides.
SUZUKA 8 HOURS	Namcot SP19 59%	Without the sit-on bikes of the coin-op, but with some horribly unwelcoming gameplay, this is best left alone.
SYNDICATE	Ocean SP26 80%	Unfortunately it's been cut down for the SNES, but it's still the isometric strategy game of the gods.
T2: JUDGEMENT DAY	Acclaim/LJN SP19 52%	The only SNES game with a naked Arnie sprite – but hardly worthy of attention because of it, we hope you'll agree.
THE AVEN OF BATMAN & ROBIN	Konami SP25 80%	A haphazard mish-mash of gaming styles that only just come together.
THE AVEN OF MIGHTY MAX	Sony SP28 83%	Cartoon licence and a youngster in a baseball cap make for... a surprisingly good strategy platformer.
TETRIS BATTLE GAIDEN	Bullet Proof SP18 86%	Excellent reworking of the *Tetris* concept with magic spells, cute characters, the lot. Sterling straight *Tetris* mode, too.
THEME PARK	Ocean SP32 91%	An excellent management sim from Bullfrog. Tough to get into but ultimately massively rewarding.
TIME COP	JVC SP34 15%	Appalling platform drudgery with no trace of gameplay. Flawed in every respect and kicked deservedly in by our Zy.
TIME TRAX	Malibu/T•HQ SP20 73%	Arriving at a time when T•HQ's rep was at an all-time low, this was a minor revelation for them. Not bad at all.
TIN STAR	Nintendo SP33 61%	A set of varied game styles building a rather linear, boring western. Not one we'd recommend.
TINTIN IN TIBET	Infogrames SP39 25%	Super-faithful graphics meet gameplay of the pumpular persuasion to grim effect.
TINY TOONS WILD & WACKY SPORTS	Konami SP25 78%	Track And Field 'update' for up to five players which only comes alive with that full player quota, frustratingly.
TOY STORY	T•HQ SP43 79%	*Toy Story* marked a new high point on the Mega Drive, but on the SNES it graphically loses out to *DKC2* every time.
TROY AIKMAN NFL FOOTBALL	Electronic Arts SP26 77%	If you know nothing about American footy, you're doomed to fail. No, at life in general.
TRUE LIES	Acclaim SP30 74%	A carelessly-planned *Smash TV*-viewed explorer. Plenty of Arnie-esque blasting, but it's all a bit predictable.
TURBO TOONS	Empire SP36 42%	Repetitive licence racing abound. There are no cars, just cartoon characters trundling and weaving, dalek-style.
TURN AND BURN	Accolade SP20 71%	Neat presentation fails to hide what is essentially a paper-thin flight sim/shoot-'em-up hybrid.
ULTIMA VI	FCI SP22 45%	The *Ultima* series may be big on the PC, but this instalment made us gag. Notable for its odd, skewed overhead perspective.
ULTIMATE PARODIUS	Konami SP27 85%	A tribute to the original *Parodius*, though it doesn't show too many improvements.
UNIRALLY	Nintendo SP29 85%	Acclaimed by everyone (Pope included), but unfortunately not as close to Godliness as his Holiness suggests.
URBAN STRIKE	T•HQ SP39 75%	Retains that fine *Strike* playability but with clunky scrolling and stop-start gameplay.
VORTEX	Sony SP26 90%	Super FX transforming battle-suit destruction makes for some of the best fun you can have with a torpedo.
WARLOCK	Acclaim SP31 68%	A bog-standard platformer, relying on spells to give it that vital spark. And they don't.
WEAPONLORD	Ocean SP36 75%	A below-par *Street Fighter II* crib with, believe it or not, some weapons but obviously no gore.
WILDSNAKE	Spectrum Holobyte SP29 70%	*Tetris*-inspired drop-'em-down puzzler with snakes of various lengths and colours.
WOLFENSTEIN 3D	Imagineer SP17 78%	Before *Doom* – but on the SNES – there was this: its simplistic forebear which offered absorbing, if short-lived, gameplay.
WORLD HEROES 2	Takara SP22 80%	Takara have another bash at beating *SFII* and come off quite respectably. The feel's not quite right but it's smile-worthy.
WOLVERINE: ADAMANTIUM RAGE	Acclaim SP29 60%	Apart from the brilliantly animated main sprite, there's absolutely nothing that distinguishes it at all.
WORLD MASTERS GOLF	Virgin SP35 80%	By no means perfect, but your best bet for golf on the SNES. Looks are acceptable and controls surprisingly pleasant.
WWF RAW	Acclaim SP27 84%	Theatrical WWF violence with knobs on, beating *Royal Rumble*. It's still all a bit silly, though.
WWF WRESTLEMANIA	Acclaim SP38 84%	An amusing, if vaguely repetitive grappler. Only six WWF stars but plenty of silly moves.
X_KALIBER 2097	Activision SP20 68%	Platform hack-'em-up most memorable for its 'real band' music (it's pumpy) and a villain by the name of Spuke.
X-MEN MUTANT APOCALYPSE	Capcom SP29 52%	SNES rule 183: All X-Men games are humdrum, horizontally-scrolling beat-'em-ups. Alphabetical order, mind.
YOSHI'S ISLAND	Nintendo SP36 94%	Yoshi takes the lead in what at first appears to be the best Mario game yet. It's certainly close between this and *Super Mario World*.
ZOKU: THE LEGEND OF BISHIN	Magifact SP19 58%	The idea's fab (drive somewhere and have a big fight), but the driving bit is confusing and the fighting horribly limited.

FINAL FANTASY FORUM

We've still got a couple more months of valuable material waiting to be squeezed into the Forum, but after that? Your call, folks. Write in and be firm with us.

These games must have incredible universal appeal, judging from the international response we've had. To prove the point, this month's Final Fantasy Forum contains general Square tippage, queries and loveliness from all corners of the globe. I wonder if you can buy anoraks in Dubai?

No, you've lost me

We've received a few maps from regular contributors, like Steve Allen of Worksop, to help *Evermore* players through Gothica's Dark Forest. Valiant efforts, and thanks for them, but I'm afraid there's a simpler solution. LOOK UP! The forest is split into small distinct sections, normally about two screens long, with exits leading off. You know you're on the right track if you can find this dark Greeble sitting in the treetops somewhere in the vicinity: if he's nowhere to be seen, backtrack a section and try another exit. Following him will guide you through the Forest.

Considering the number of mazes that crop up in RPGs – and the number of times I've been asked for map solutions – it's probably worth passing on this general tip.

● At the entrance of a maze, choose a wall on either side – let's say right. Follow that right-hand wall or border and stick to it like glue. Ignore the temptation of the various paths and crossroads you encounter, and proceed by keeping that wall on your right and following it wherever it turns (see fig.1). You may find that you're retracing your steps on many occasions by chasing up and down those dead ends, but the exit should eventually present itself.

Fig. 1

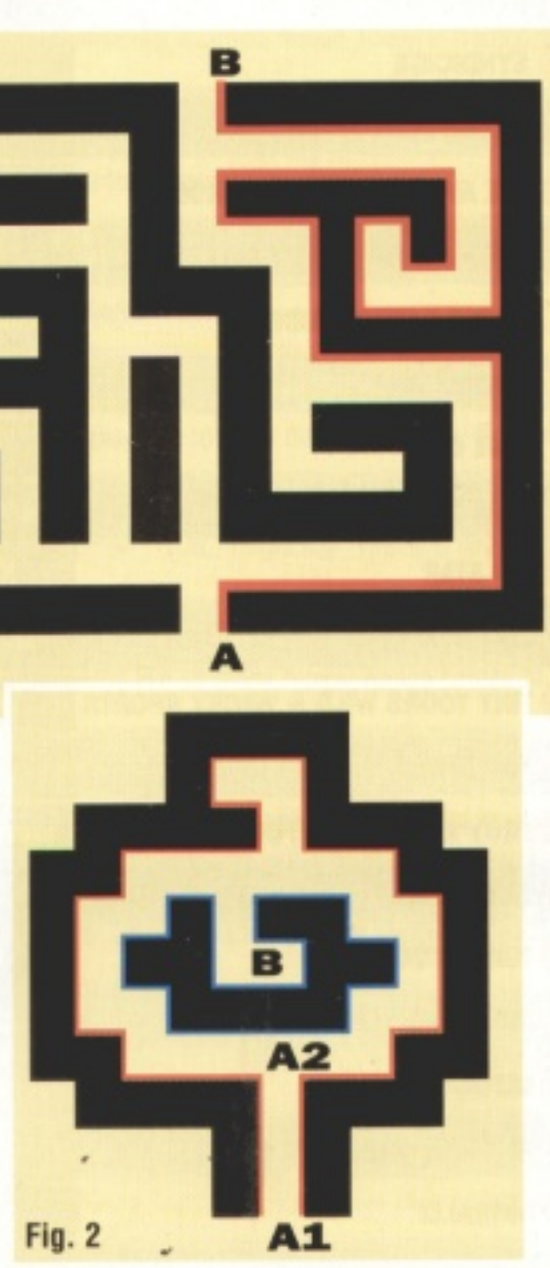


Fig. 2

● If it doesn't work, the exit may be internal (fig.2). Look for a junction to which you're repeatedly returning (A2, in this example), take an untouched wall and start the method again from there.

Unfortunately, this simple method only works with a certain topology of 'true' maze – you can't use it for general exploration. Moving walls and teleports will screw up your plans, obviously, and you may also miss many features hidden within the maze (one wall of the Dark Forest winds to the exit, but take the other and you'll find an old man who gives you the One Up spell). But we've been applying this since the days of Dungeon Master, and it's always worth trying if you find the idea of mapping on paper as objectionable as we do.

You can try tempting him down from his nest with a dragon on a stick. But don't expect it to work.

ART OF DARKNESS

We've got Reema Al-Malik of Dubai to thank for this month's reader art, a splendid depiction of *Chrono Trigger*'s Dark Matter in action. It also gives us an insight into Reema's playing style (i.e. unnecessarily pyrotechnic displays of force against bumbling Megasaurs), of which we thoroughly approve.

PROFILES

Your letters tend to agree that *Chrono Trigger*'s Frog – or Kaeru, in the Japanese – is more heroic than the actual hero. Presumably, that's a consequence of him being the only fully fleshed-out character with a genuine *FF*-style history?

Aha. Kaeru tempts a couple of young ladies back to his pad. Frog? Pad? Geddit?

Frog can equip almost any armour (I suspect he'd favour the Black Mail – never can tell when that Magus might turn on you, eh?) but an interesting set-up is the Masamune, Hero Medal and the Haste Helm gained in the Black Omen. With a doubled attack rate and a greater likelihood of a critical hit, you can add an extra physical strike between those dual and triple techniques.

"Can you ever change Frog back and play him as Glenn?" asks Chris Hoddinott of Perth, Australia. Not in a playable way, no, but there is a way to see his curse

The armour can change accordingly, but nothing can stop him now. Except, perhaps, a giant heron.

broken. There are two special endings that pivot on Frog's story. Since they both involve defeating Lavos early in the game, you might need to play through using your 'New Game +' option.

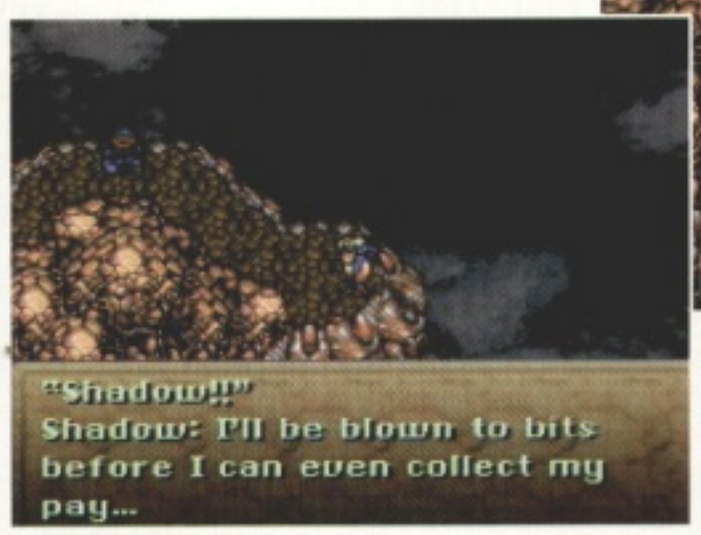
To let Frog avenge the death of Cyrus, play up to the point where the Masamune has been repaired and Frog joins you for the second time. Defeat Lavos now and the end sequence follows Frog as he makes a lone assault on the lair of Magus. In the final scene, a cloaked human figure is seen standing atop the high tower.

For the less serious dramatic finale, defeat Lavos when you first return from the world of 600 AD. You arrive back at the Millenial Fair time machine, where everyone recognises that Marle is really the princess. She returns to her father's castle,

One more time

The regally named Louis French raises a common *FFIII* query: there are still gaps in the Esper list! Have we really printed how to find all of them? (SP39). Yes, we have. One gap arises from turning Odin into Raiden, the others are necessary spaces to allow you to remove an Esper from a character without replacing it.

And by popular demand, but for the last time... To save Shadow from a lonely death in the World of Balance, you need to wait twice before jumping from the Floating Continent. Opt to wait when it asks you, then step back and forth to call



up a new prompt specifically asking if you'll wait for Shadow. He won't turn up until the last few seconds are ticking away. You'll find him again in the Cave on the Veldt in the World of Ruin, but he soon disappears from his sickbed in Thamasa. Wager the sword Striker (also found in that Cave) at the Colosseum and Shadow will challenge you. Beat him and he'll join your forces permanently.

This is the second question prompt you want. Don't get itchy, as nothing happens until 00.05.

We will not be saying this again. Ever. If you keep missing issues, get a subscription.

BIKER TROVE

Got your Bike Key handy? Because Etienne Bolduc of Lac-Etchemin, Quebec, has provided us with an invaluable list of prizes to win in *Chrono Trigger*'s 2300 AD bike race. You need to have the Race Log to record your high scores. If you haven't found it, walk the distance from Lab 32 rather than ride it and look for a chest en route.

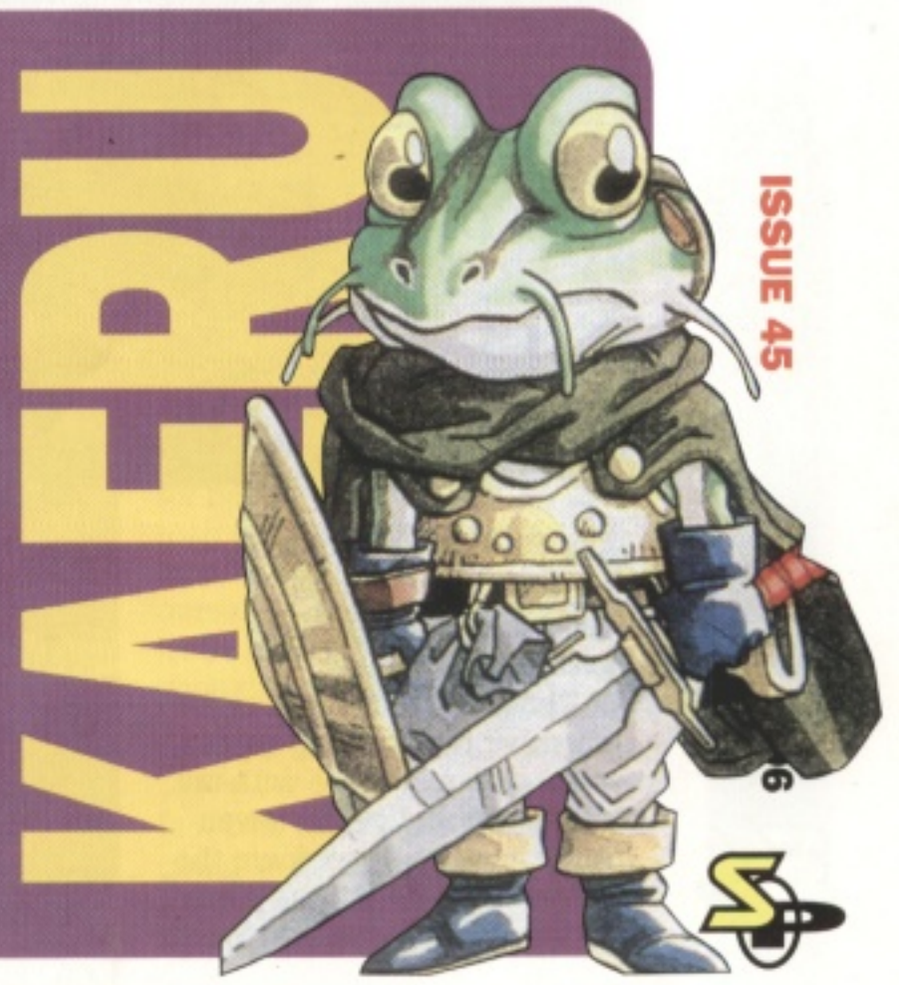
Points Awarded	Prize
77710	Mid-Ethers
3 identical digits	Ether
1300+	5 Mid-Ethers
1500	Power Tab*
2000	5 Ethers*
2110	???

*RX-XR will only give you these once.

To improve your top speed, you need to steer in front of Johnny so that he constantly nudges you forward. Use your turbo boosts to get out of trouble but save one for an assured victory at the finishing line. There's a question attached: what prize awaits the winner with 2110 points or more? If you know, speak up in the Forum. Also, does anybody know why it says L and R change perspective, when they clearly don't?

Sadly, Kaeru's later years are marred by an Elvis-like decline. You won't find a bluebottle within 10 miles.

and the King states that a 400 year old wedding album has been discovered. Despite having saved the world before breakfast, Marle isn't prepared for the pictures of Queen Leene and Frog...



EXCITABLE VIEWPOINT PLAYBACK

Keep postmen in work by making use of the great British postal service. Write to: *Super Play*, Future Publishing, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath BA1 2BW.

'SEVEN COURSE MEAL'

Should there have been an obituary in your magazine, then this letter would have been part of it: for unfortunately, there has been a death in my family. It was only last Sunday morning as I was flicking through my latest copy of *Super Play*, when something reminded me of my Spectrum 48k, which has been lying upstairs in my loft for the past four or five years after the power pack decided its days were numbered and blew up. Something inside me clicked. I had to get it down and somehow make it work, but how? It was then I remembered the adaptor in my cupboard. I plugged it in and turned on the power, but, instead of being greeted with clicks and beeps, a plume of smoke drifted up from the interface port. My heart leapt, my head spun and my vision blurred. At the age of 12 my Spectrum had departed from us. It didn't deserve to go this way... sure, it only had 10 colours (if you include black and white), but it did offer the one thing that makes a best-selling video game: incredible gameplay.

Those out there who can remember tape loading games would probably agree with me. Even if you could eat a seven-course meal, and nip down the pub for a pint before the game had loaded, the wait was worth it. Those who've never played classics such as *Magic Land Dizzy* or *Jet Set Willy* will not really understand my point, but who would want to hurtle around a race track at 250mph when you could wander around as an egg with boxing gloves? Alas, the grandfathers of the gaming world are being forgotten about as times and technology move on. Would software companies please listen to my heartfelt plea – forget about fashion, beautiful graphics and sampled music and bring back originality and proper 100% gameplay.

I have written to the government requesting two minutes silence some time soon, but am still waiting for a reply.

Paul Lawrence, Cirencester

Of course, of course. Gameplay is what we need. But as we strive for perfection and as we stride into the future, surely it's not too much to ask for it all – gameplay, graphics, sound and originality – every once in a while, at least. Of course, gameplay can outweigh the disadvantages of cacky graphics as the craze for retro games so clearly demonstrates. But, I can't help wondering if we're not looking at the past through rose-tinted glasses.

'THEY WILL RETURN'

Square will return to Nintendo. When large carts can be produced cheaply, 64DD drives are common and the N64 shifts by the metric tonne, they will return. Probably.

Andrew Crane

Of course. Squaresoft know which side their bread is buttered, so to speak.

'DEVOUT WORSHIPPER'

The time has come for me to voice my deep-rooted fears about Nintendo. Having bought the SNES on its first day of release and having previously owned an NES and a Game Boy, you could say I was a devout worshipper of the great god Nintendo. However, it seems to me that the Nintendo 64 is not shaping up as many of us had expected. You said in issue 43 that "Nintendo are encouraging only 3D titles" and this to me is a great tragedy. After playing *Virtua Fighter 1* and *2* extensively, I decided that it had nothing like the playability of *SF2* or *KI1* and *2*, so can we expect only 3D titles of the fighting game genre on the N64? Also, does this mean that future versions of *Metroid*, *Donkey Kong* and *Zelda*, etc, are going to be 3D polygon affairs, I hope not. I mean, sure, *Super Mario 64* looks lovely (although polygons can never match pixel drawn or rendered graphics), it still just looks like an interactive cartoon, and how are Nintendo going to match, let alone better, the playability of *Yoshi's Island* or *SMW* with that! I need convincing that the death of 2D gaming has not come to pass.

As we've seen already on the Saturn and the Playstation with their multitude of 3D polygon race, fighting and adventure games, 3D graphics do not a great game make. Why do Sony, Sega and, unfortunately, Nintendo think that all next generation games have to be 3D?

I wanted to see the N64 with games like *Zelda 5*, with graphics to die for and a huge world to explore. I wanted to see a *Metroid 4* with enormous maps, interstellar travel, hundreds of gadgets and weapons, and a *Castlevania 5* with a stunning sound and haunted mansions to chase Dracula all over the globe. I don't want 3D overhauls that all look the same. I fear *Metroid 5* will be a *Doom* clone and that RPGs will be first person *Dungeon Master* affairs.

Nintendo have produced a console of the future that we are not yet ready for and do not yet need. Please tell me that the Virtual Boy was the beginning of the end for Nintendo.

Sam Dowler, Elstree

You say: graphics do not a great game make, and you are entirely correct in that. But here, your argument gets a little bumbling... It seems to us that you are taking issue soley with polygon graphics, on the basis of what you have seen on certain other machine systems. You cannot judge the value of gameplay on looks alone. Polygon graphics, as long as they handle well, can create some stunning 3D effects. And you can't argue that a realistic 3D environment is automatically going to make a game devoid of gameplay. So before you dismiss the N64 out of hand altogether, do bear in mind that you can't really comment on the

KINDLY LEAVE THE STAGE

There are two cows in a field, one turns to the other and says, "Here, have you heard about this mad cow disease?" The other looks at him and says, "Yeah, doesn't bother me. I'm a squirrel!"
Paul Lawrence, Cirencester
4/10
Ooh, topical.

Man 1: Did you hear about the man who sniffed curry powder?
Man 2: No. What happened to him?
Man 1: He went into a corma.
Alan Edwards, Deeside
4/10
Ooh, spicy.

Q Why do golfers wear two pairs of trousers?
A In case they get a hole in one.
Gareth Roberts and Ivor Williams
2/10
Old one.

Wife: Dear, put that Tyson and Bruno fight on again.
Husband: Why?
Wife: I want to time an egg.
Martin McKenzie, Oakes, Huddersfield
1/10
Dud one.

Get 5/10 or above for your joke and win something spesh! Kindly Leave The Stage, *Super Play*, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath BA1 2BW.

RANT OF THE MONTH

Following last month's superb rant from Gerry Spencer, we feature another royal rave from, er, Gerry Spencer (again!) who is rapidly earning a reputation as *Super Play*'s own rent-a-rant columnist...

I felt the need to stick my oar in again over the unfair criticisms levelled at the N64's expected sound capabilities. Why is it supposedly a disadvantage that the N64 will not be able to stream in music from CD to accompany gameplay? Well, it depends on what you're looking for? Let me address a few common misconceptions...

Argument: The lack of 'real instrument sounds will be painfully obvious; besides, replaying a sample at different speeds to give a different pitch sounds so dated.
Answer: Publicity from Nintendo themselves states that the audio processor uses an algorithm which reproduces a waveform of the instrument sound in relation to its pitch. If such a crude effect as sample 'clocking' appears in a game, then you can be sure that it was put there deliberately.

Argument: The CD medium is audibly superior to other formats.
Answer: Wrong. The CD format uses a resolution that barely yields better reproduction than a good phonogram (record), and falls below that of the original Japanese DCC system (48kHz vs 44.1). On a technical level, non-linear quantisation during recording introduces errors in high amplitude signals. If Philips had really been concerned with 'perfect' reproduction, then linear 20-bit quantisation would seem to be the minimum required. Conversely, the 44.1 kHz sample rate is overkill, as that rate equates to a maximum 22kHz sound reproduction. Why bother? FM radio peters out at 14 kHz. Most of us can't hear above 15kHz. Early CD players actually only reproduce 14 bits after error correction, and some later ones only converted 14 bits anyway. Ultimately, a CD bitstream produces a stepped waveform which is artificially smoothed, and in terms of fidelity a record player wins every time.

Argument: But with 24 channels of processor-generated sound as well, surely the Saturn et al would blow away the competition...
Answer: Overkill again. Unless you listen to the Royal Philharmonic orchestra, the chances are that you've probably never even heard 24 different instruments played simultaneously. And if they were, it'd sound bloody awful. Take out two or three channels for guns blatting down and bones crunching, and you don't need that many channels to hold down a good tune. I'd rather have 8 channels and a good riff.

Argument: The CD can hold up to 74 minutes of music...
Answer: Yeah. If there's no game code!

Argument: ...and you couldn't reproduce that amount from a cart.
Answer: Says who? A second of digitised music uses 44,100 times 16 bits (2 bytes) which is 84.2kBytes. By contrast, each channel of sound on the N64 should require only one byte for the pitch and one byte for the voice number if using the in-built sounds. And with all 64 channels playing 20 notes per second (very, very fast), that would still only use 2.4kBytes/sec.

Argument: Recognised contemporary artists can get in on score-writing for games.
Answer: And who's taken up the offer so far? Pop Will Eat Itself, that's who! Let proper game music writers of the inestimable calibre of Tim Follin do it properly. After all, music is meant to accompany the game, not distract from it.

Argument: But Nintendo's game music doesn't sound like proper music! All... bitty and plinky. And Japanese-y.
Answer: First, how would you define proper music? Most (CD based) game music is recorded by one or two guys in a recording studio with a stack of MIDI synthesizers and a PC. No great effort involved there: set the beat box to 'funky' and spend all afternoon pressing random keys. Record onto a CD and bob's-yer-uncle. But our venerable SNES programmers have been constantly striving to outdo themselves (well, some of them have) and push back the limits of game music, working with the humble PCM-voiced SNES. Anyway, bitty-plinky-Japanesey is more original (and culturally stimulating) than some plodding synth-funk. It's characterful. Japan has the best elevator music in the world. In the end, a CD soundtrack is just as likely to have been made using PC music-writing software controlling synths that are far inferior to the consoles' on-board sound processors anyway.

Final argument:
The mighty Yamaha developed the sound board for the Saturn and Sony's reputation in the music world is not to be underestimated. Their sound facilities must be better than Nintendo's, surely?
Answer: Why? Remember, Nintendo have based their in-built voices on real instruments, whereas anyone who has ever used a Yamaha synth will agree that 'electro-maracas' and 'space fantasy harp' is typical of the unimaginative repertoire available. These people bring you the cheesiest, rummiest £20 porta-sound planks that bad taste can buy. Professional musicians use Korg or Roland synths, not Yamaha. And Sony's reputation is to do with recording and marketing other people's music, not making it.

Summing up, I would like to say only this – in trying to imitate real music, you will invariably be compared to real music, and in game music terms, this means unfavourably. If you choose to define and reside in your own musical genre, then your music will be appreciated in its proper context. The N64 has a dedicated, purpose-designed sound chip that was designed and built using the latest cutting-edge technology, not bits and pieces lifted from the spares bin at the end of a Yamaha production line.

As a staffer on *Ultimate Future Games* once commented on the sound capabilities of the N64: "The guitars will sound like guitars, and the bagpipes will still sound awful." That'll do for me.
Gerry Spencer, Helston, Cornwall

Well, he's made his mind up, and, we have come to realise, he argues his corner rather well, don't you think?

Does anyone else want to put the world to rights? Are you man enough to oppose Mr Spencers' point-of-view? Does anyone want to blow apart another video gaming myth? If so, you could end up featuring in *Super Play*'s 'Rant of the Month'.

playability of a game on the basis of a few screenshots you've seen in *Super Play*, just as we can't review a game and give it our final verdict unless we've played it. Such speculation on your terms is worthless. The game sequences we've seen look wonderful, but we're reserving our judgement for next month when we get to play the games for real over at the E3 show in Los Angeles next month.

As for you taking umbridge with the fact that Nintendo have produced a machine of the future – what's wrong with that? What would you rather? Perhaps you would rather that we were still playing with hoops and whips.

Super Play's top tip for you: get a sense of optimism.

'SNES IS STILL THE BEST'

I love my SNES. It's easy to forget that the PSX and Saturn have been around for nearly 18 months now, and I can count on one hand the number of good games that they have. And their classics are conspicuous by their absence. Why complain about N64 delays, when the SNES is still the best console.
Steve Hargreaves, off the internet
Quite right. Thank you. Whingers, take note!

'THE THIRTEENTH MONTH'

I have noticed that *Super Play* is now printed every four weeks. Hurrah! So there are now 13 issues a year and you are still naming issues by months. What will you call the thirteenth month?
Andrew 'Cheesecake' Vickerman, Newby
Yes, much to our chagrin, and much to the detriment of our own free time and sanity there are now 13 issues a year. Since SNES releases are – how you say? – following a downward trend, this means that we have to work even harder to bring you the fun-packed info-heavy tome that we continue to be – so, for that, you should be grateful. As for naming conventions for the mag – simple, we bring out the July issue in April, confuse ourselves and have a Christmas issue in October. See? You shouldn't have asked.

'KOOPA KAPERS'

Is it true that *Super Mario RPG* is going to be called Koopa Kapers over here?

Brian, King's Heath
It won't be called anything. Cos it's not getting an official UK release any more. (See p.12.)

'WHY DON'T YOU'

I have a suggestion: why don't you do a What Cart every month, but concentrate on a particular genre each issue?
Isabella Dostal, London
You've almost read our minds. As you may have noticed we have brought a similar idea into force this ish with a feature on the grand old genre of RPGs. Sift through this and you'll discover exactly where the charm of RPGs lies, where the genre is going and even a handy guide to *Super Play*'s recommended selection of said games. Stand by, though, for there's more. Over the next few issues we plan to run similar features focusing on different types of game: next month we're homing in on the beat-'em-ups, while forthcoming issues will cover all you need to know about platformers and puzzlers.

WRITE NOW!

Express yourself to the nation. It won't cost more than the price of a stamp.

Super Play,
Future Publishing,
30 Monmouth Street, Bath
BA1 2BW.

ENVELOPE ART

Get those crayons out and show us what you can do. Send all attempts at artistic expression to: Envelope Art, *Super Play*, Future Publishing, 30 Monmouth St, Bath BA1 2BW.

Jo Hughes from Dungannon – you're a right old softie, you are. Still, it makes a change to see some anime reader art in this style.

Joe Barnsley's Chunners seems to be putting the beef on a bit.

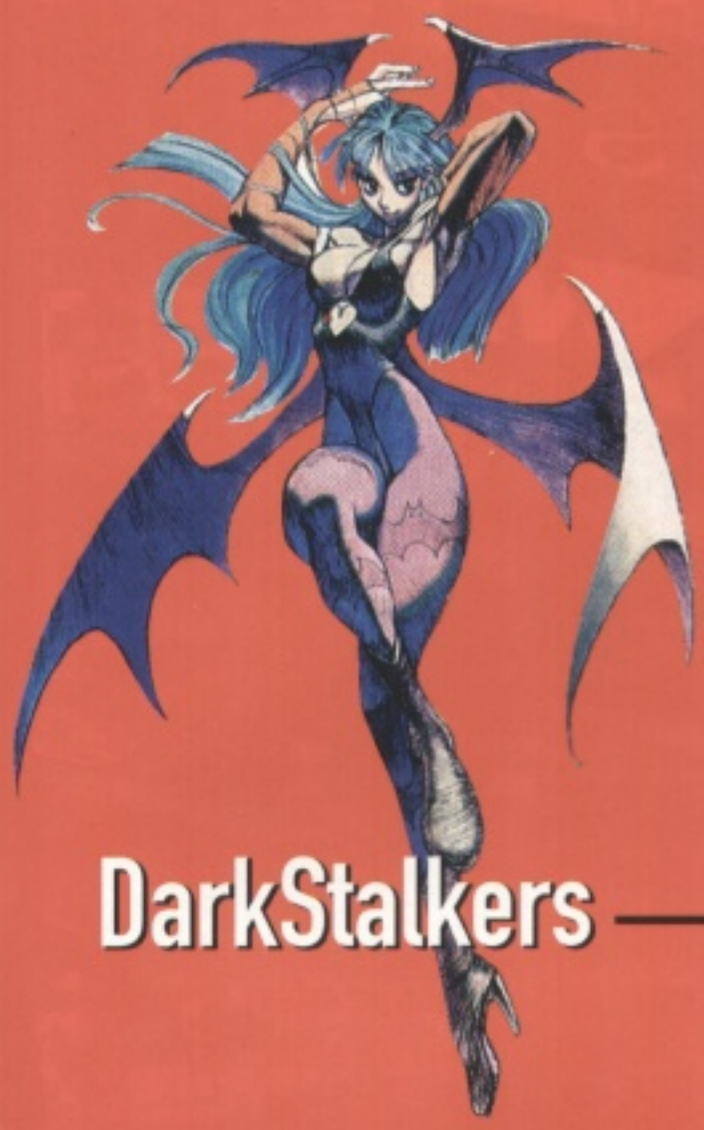
Gillian Ha's bikini clad Lum from Urusei Yatsura (or 'Those Obnoxious Aliens').

Sadly, this top Spidey pic came to us anonymously. But it's tops nonetheless.

Joe Hughes from Dungannon's dream lady, we suspect. Er, he's *behiiiiind* you.

Although you can't make it out here – Dave Flynn's offering is shimmering with glittery bits.

SCRAP!



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SUPER MARKET

Sit back with a mug of steaming hot tea, relax and peruse the ads to pick up a barg or two...

SOFTWARE FOR SALE

● SNES games for sale! Chrono Trigger (US) £35, Yoshi's Island (UK) £30, also Fire FX adaptor £5 and Super Play Gold £15. Phone 01772 815345 and ask for Wil.

● Killer Instinct for sale £16 (UK) fully boxed, good condition, P+P included 0121 544 5329.

● Yoshi's Island (US) mint condition boxed with instructions £40. Call 01494 528592 between 5pm and 10pm.

● For sale FFIII £50 and Fire FX convertor £10. All maps and books included, only one owner, phone Mary on 0169 3765269.

● Chrono Trigger (UK) £50 ono. Boxed with instructions. Mint condition phone 0181 856 5838.

● Super Tennis (UK) with box and booklet sell for £10 or swap for Super Mario World (must be UK) 01566 776020 Launceston.

● SNES (UK) games for sale! Mortal Kombat II £30 Fifa International Soccer = £25. Cybernator = £20 - £25 All in good condition, boxed and instructions. Tel 01302 531814 and ask for Ryan.

● Super Play Issues 4 - 33, 35 - 38, 40 + 41 and Super Play Gold £1 each or all for £30 0181 845 7914.

● SNES games for sale MKII £15, Rock 'N' Roll Racing among others. Batman & Robin, Star Wars etc. 01727 855373 ask for Billy.

● SNES: Yu Yu Hakusho 1 + 2 (JAP) £30 each. FF 111 (US) £30, Datel programmable adaptor £25 or £15 with game. All incl. postage. Tel 01702 344422.

● Zelda, Another World, Dragon's Lair, Starwing, All Stars, Equinox, Ghouls and Ghosties. All UK £15 each Tiny Toons, Pocky and Rocky (US) £15 each. Tel Keith 01993 823326 all boxed with instructions.

● Street Racer £20, no instructions, Strike Gunner £15, DKC £25: 0121 4432453.

● SNES games for sale: Secret of Mana (UK) good condition £15 bargain, Final Fantasy III, good condition only £40, get your hands on one, the other or both! 01684 574191.

● For sale: NFL Quarterback Club 96 (UK) £50, Retribution (PC/CD Rom) £30 (both boxed with instructions). Also Donkey Kong Country GO-APE! CD (unavailable in shops) £10. Write to Gary Divant, 39 Knollbeck Lane, Brampton, Wombwell, Barnsley, South Yorkshire S73 0TR.

● Yoshi's Island (US) £40, Secret of Mana (US) £25, Equinox (US) £20, Super Turrican(US) £20, Mario Kart (US) (No Box) £10 Super Punchout (UK) (No Box) £10 Phone Seth on 01286 871515.

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● SNES (UK) with nine games incl. Killer Instinct, MK2, Mkart, Madden 95, Starwing, Aladdin, Super Tennis, SMW + 2 control Pads £220 Tel 0181 2242195.

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● SNES (UK) 3 joypads boxed, 8 games, Flashback, ISS Deluxe, Bomberman 3, Yoshi's Island, sell for £200 ONO 0181 200 1578.

● SNES (UK) excellent condition 2 pads, import converter, Action Replay, 8 games inc, SFII Turbo, Super SFII, MKII, KI, Mario Kart + Scart Lead + game guides £175 ono. Tel Jason 01273 735196.

● SNES (UK), all leads, 2 pads, one 4 way adaptor good condition, 13 games eg. MK 2, 3, Earthworm Jim, SOM2, Killer Instinct, most games boxed, £320 ono. Phone after 5, ask for Martin 01273 703185.

● SNES,14 top games, includes SSFII and Stunt Race FX. Two brand new Turbo pads & converter £180. Tel 01438 740801.

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● Jap Mega Drive, 1 pad Sonic 2 and E.A. Hockey £35 or swap for Famicom. Games Tetris and Bomberman must be boxed ask for Simon 01262 672607.

● Game Boy and games including Gremlins 2, SML and Batman 2, (all boxed with instructions). Paid nearly £230. I will pay postage; if interested, phone Ian on 0181 890 1632 Thanks.

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● Over 150 games for the SNES (JAP) plus the SNES itself only £300. If you buy I tell you a big secret! Call 0370 321106.

● Amiga 1200 needs hard drive, 6 games & cover disks £200 or might swap for SNES games. Telephone: 0121 459 6131.

● SNES 5 games including DKC, SFII, Mario Kart, and Super Tenis + 3 joypads £90 ono call 7am - 9pm every day 01744 737952.

WANTED

● Final Fight: I want desperately. Will pay good prices. Contact Alex after 4 pm 0161 2245030. Desperately wanted issues 24, 25, 26 Super Play, please call Oliver 0161 720 8760.

● Shadowrun (UK) wanted badly - must have STR Book, phone 01244 375801 after 4pm offers considered.

● Any nationality Final Fight and Super Star Wars or Super Empire Strikes Back. Phone 0161 449 0534 to sell to me.

● FFIII + UK adaptor will pay up to £60. Phone Lee any time on 0181 287 1793.

● Issue 22 of Super Play, will pay £3 or swap for Pugsley's Scavenger Hunt with no box/instructions. Tel 01598 763315.

● Top UK SNES games wanted. Reasonable prices paid. Call Simon Erskine after 5pm (01232) 768312 or write: 3 Tillysburn Drive Belfast N Ireland BT4 2PE.

● Front Mission, any RPGs, EWJ1 or 2, SSFII, Turtles: Tournament Fighters, Goemon 2, Kirby's Avalanche JAP or US only write Imran Chaudhry, 72 Lakenheath, Southgate, London N14 4RS or E MAIL toto@cs.man.ac.uk

● Playstation wanted at a good price give us a ring on 01590 671842.

● Wanted cheap US SNES. Also wanted FFIII, Chrono Trigger or any other good US RPGs and Super Play issues 22 & 25. Call in PM 0181 257 1151.

● Wanted desperately: Final Fantasy II. Will pay up to £40 or swap for any

2 of my Plok (UK) Mystic Quest (UK) Vortex (US). Tel 01357 300 501, ask for Gary.

● Ren and Stimpy merchandise wanted: computer games; Time Warp (SNES), Weediots (GB), Space Cadets (GB) videos; The Stupidest Stories, On Duty and The Stinkiest Stories. also wanted; badges, games, toys etc. Interested? Phone Ian on 0181 890 1632. Thanks.

● Wanted any old Game Boy shoot-'em-ups, RPGs, platformers etc Especially Nemesis 1 & 2, Mystic Quest, Kirby £5-£10. Phone Stephen on 0141 357 4865

● Do you have Super Play 22 and don't want to have it? Then call me, I'm willing to pay 3 pounds for a mag even if it's not in good condition. 01777 860639.

● Doom for the Atari Jaguar, must have box and instructions, will pay £15-£20. 01225 339244

● SNES US urgently wanted, will pay a reasonable price, if possible, sell with Final Fantasy III. Phone Roger after 4pm (01543) 671437.

● Issues – 17, 26 and 27 of Super Play, if they are in good condition and you want to sell them phone now. Thanks 01372 45623.

● Kirby's Avalanche/Super Puyo Puyo wanted, good price. Tel 01562 882313.

● Mortal Kombat II must be in good condition, must have instruction manual + box will pay up to £16 or will swap. Call Daniel on 01531 634282 call after 4.00pm.

● Final Fantasy II. I'm paying excellent prices (£50+) 01702 554543 (Southend on Sea).

● I need FFII or Chrono Trigger (JAP or US). I will swap it for Legend, Parodius & Sunset Riders (any combination). Phone Jon on 01242 518318.

SWAPS

● Will swap, all UK, MK1, F-Zero, Jungle Book, Starwing, Mickey Mania and Empire Strikes Back. Write to: G Long, 79 Riverside C.T. Oxford OX1 4NQ.

● I have Rampart (US), Operation Europe (US), and will swap for Killer Instinct (UK) or Mortal Kombat (UK) II or III. Telephone: 0181 677 6511 and ask for Rayyan.

● I will swap my Plok (UK), Starwing (UK) and Pitfall (UK) for your SB3 or Smash TV. Must be boxed with instructions. Call Owen on 01506 494279.

● I will swap my Return of the Jedi or Link To The Past for your Batman Forever, Sim City, MKII or Doom (SNES UK). Greg Hendry, 4 Ercall Ave, West Gorton, Manchester.

● SNES Pal Version games for swap including Mario, Starwing, MK1, Flashback, Power Manager, DKC, True Lies, Cybernator, Castlevania, will swap for Sim City, Bomberman 2 - 1 game, Unirally, Bomberman 3, Theme Park 2 - 3 games. Call after 5 pm, ask for Alex, speak loudly please. Berkhamsted 843501.

● I will swap my Rainbow Bell Adventures (Pop 'n' Twinbee) or Tiny Toons for Chrono Trigger (US) or Full Throttle (PC). Preferred Full Throttle. Also want any plane mags? No? Got loads anyway. Sell mags for good offer. Ask for Joe. Phone now! 0181 898 9679

● Swap Spike McFang, Soul Blazer, Equinox, Actraiser, DKC2, Yoshi's Island, Secret of Evermore, Kid Clown, for FFII or III, Chrono Trigger Lufia, EarthBound, or any good RPG (UK or US) 01458 834124.

● I will sell Secret of Evermore (US) for £40 or will swap for Chrono Trigger, call Gary on 01232 625375 for more info.

● I will swap my Secret Of Mana (US) for your UK Mario Paint, mouse and mat or for Super Bomberman 3! After 4.00pm must live in Scotland! 01535820770

● I will swap Starwing and Zelda IV for Kevin Keegan Player Manager for SNES. A. Gooder, 26 Burton Bank Road, Monk Bretton, Barnsley.

● I have the following: swap all UK versions MK1, F-Zero, Starwing, Mickey Mania, Castlevania IV, Jungle Book, Royal Rumble. Write to G Long, 79 Riverside C.T. Oxford, OX1 4NQ

● Swap my Pagemaster, Alien 3, Prince of Persia, Young Merlin, for Shadowrun, Might & Magic, Soul Blazer, FFI, FFII, FFIII (US) 01304 820043.

● I will swap my SNES with 10 games including Bomberman 3 and Sim City and other good games for a Playstation with Destruction Derby or Wipeout. 01323 482813.

● I'll swap Flashback, Desert Strike, Super Soccer, or MK I (all UK) for Lord of the Rings, Secret of Mana, Soul Blazer or Illusion of Time or any RPG (UK). Phone 01492 875039.

● I will swap any of my SSFII US, EWJ UK, SM All-Stars (UK), Bomberman 2 (UK), Blackhawk (UK) or Mickey's Magical Quest (US) for BOF, BOF2, FF0R, FFII (US/UK) Please ring 01524 770851 after 4 and ask for Davy.

● FFIII, FFII soundtracks on tape, originals and orchestral. Also YS (orchestral) ad PSii (In-Game). Free send tapes and postage or swap for anime soundtracks. Ring for details 01925 490910

● Swap Mortal Kombat 3 or Bomberman 2 for BOF or Shadowrun/or both for Final Fantasy III. Ring 01274 597878 ask for James for more details.

● Swap my Tiny Toons (UK) for your Megaman X (UK). My game is Buster Busts Loose not Wacky Sports. Tel 01236 440322 ask for Mark please.

● Swap my SNES 14 excellent top of the range games for Sony PlayStation on write to: D Pearson Cadnant Holway Road, Holywell, Clwyd CH8 7NN

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● Issues 1 to 38 of Total (Including Special) for sale £100 ono. Write or ring after 7pm ask for Peter, 12 Rowley Court, Old Earswick, York, Tel 01904 763129.

● 16 year old Chinese seeking a 15-17 age pen-pal a male who's into DBZ, Slam Dunk, E+C. Call after 4pm 01709 378546.

● Seeking female penpal aged 14+. I will reply to all letters. Steven Burrows, 23 Chaplefield Lane, Pensitone, Sheffield S30 6FS.

● Hi yo Funai, please can you stop playing that computer and don't go to Woolwich, so you can do your Chinese homework. From a friend.

● £30 for 64 Magazines! Less than 50p each! 21 Super Play from issue 16 to 23 NMS From issue 7. Total from issue 16. Super Gamer No.2 + others can deliver within Fylde. James 01253 401019 after 6pm.

● CDs + vids for sale! Ranma 1/2 - Calendar '95 CD £15, SF-Zero Music CD £30, Fatal Fury, Samurai Shodown – motion (anime) picture NTSC 25 each. Real collector items! Plus also imported posters e.g. Sailor Moon, DBZ etc. Ask for Joe 0181 462 6838.

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FANZINES

● Journey's End RPG Fanzine £1.50 or £5 for 4 issues (6 out). Write/ring 0121 604 7524 or 230 Thornbridge Av, GT Barr, B'ham B42 2AL.

● Retrogamer Issue 3, Atari VCS 2600 History, Knight Lore and Sabre Wulf, First Mario Bros game. £1.50. Keith Ainsworth, 52 Kingfieldord, Orrell Park, Liverpool L9 3AW.

● Role Call - The RPG Fanzine, Multi Format 80 reviews over 5 issues, £1.20 per issue. Special offer as of now only all back issues (116 A4 pages) £5 payable to Rachel Ryan, 25 Oakdene Ave, Woolston, Warrington, Cheshire. WA1 4NU 01925 490910.

● Nintendo Crazy: a new Fanzine dedicated to the SNES. It has tips, reviews, features, manga reviews and more! First 2 issues out now send £1 per issue to Mark Adamantion, 157 Long Drive. S. Ruislip, Middx HA4 0HL.

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Manga Video

55 minutes (dubbed) £11.99

Suffer a vampirical death and you imagine all your blood sucked from you – a horrific thing. Or is it the rather more pleasant state of affairs that Princess Miyu pretends it to be: a life of eternal beauty where you never become old and sick? Or is it that clear-cut? Obviously not, as the Princess Miyu series develops these themes...

Gore fiends beware, for this is not your average blood and guts vampire frenzy – far from it. *Vampire Princess Miyu* is whimsically romantic with a nice line in winsome characters.

There are two characters who appear in both episodes who play off each other, coming as they do from two entirely different worlds. First there's Miyu the young vampire, who really believes that by turning humans to vampires she is doing them a favour. As a trapped-in-time child-woman without the savoir-faire that comes with spending time growing up and obtaining life-knowledge, she has much to learn. Likewise, Himiko, the young medium cum paranormal investigator, who does not believe in vampires also has a few pertinent gaps in her knowledge. As the city of Kyoto is beset by tragedy with a spate of young deaths and mysterious disappearances, Himiko is called upon to find out what's going on.

The tooth, the whole tooth and nothing but the tooth.

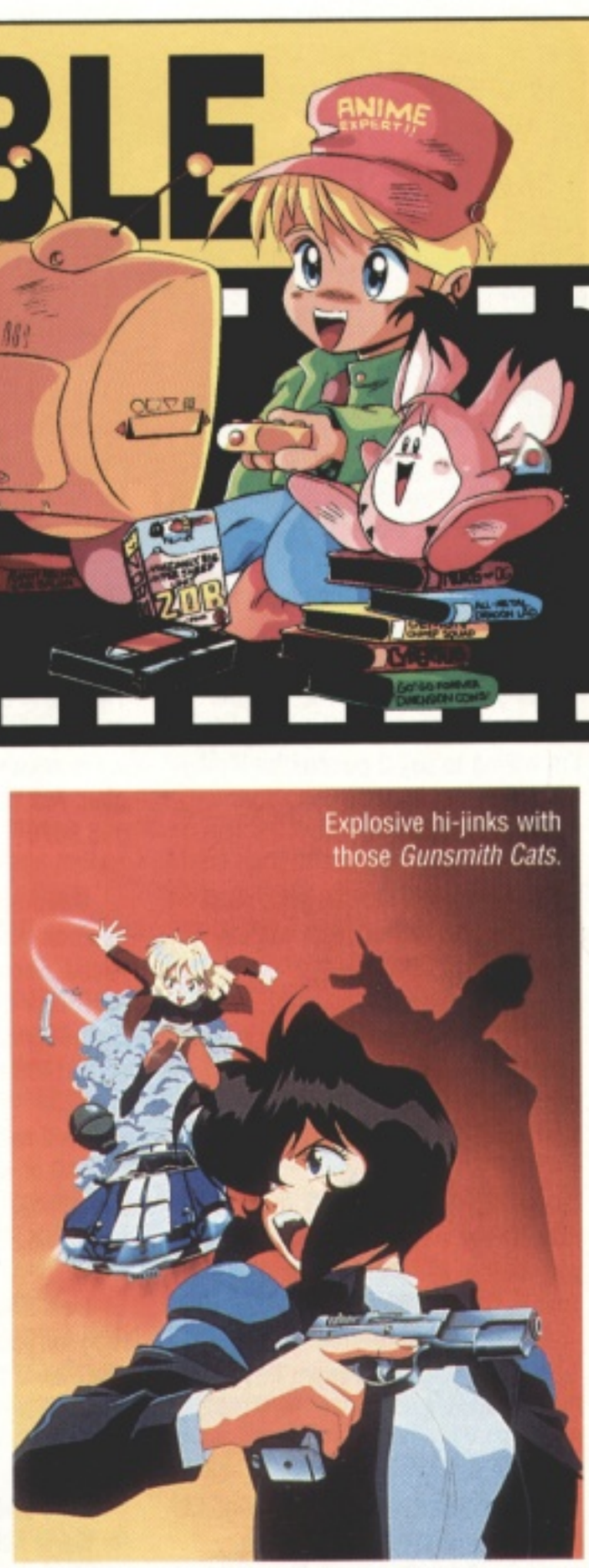
As Himiko discovers the secrets of the demons of the abyss and learns that there is indeed more than one kind of vampire, she becomes embroiled in the dilemmas faced by your everyday innocent blood-sucker. Unlike the hammer-it-home moralistic cartoons that we in the West are so used to, here we're faced with far more ephemeral concepts, a refreshing change. The end of the episodes leave you softened with sadness, as we're forced to realise the difficulties of Miyu's situation.

It's atmospheric and steeped in melancholy, mysterious and attractive, romantic and spooky – one of my faves.

Alison Harper

8 out of 10

Cert PG


Explosive hi-jinks with those *Gunsmith Cats*.

GUNSMITH CATS Vol 1

A.D. Vision UK

70 minutes (dubbed or subtitled) £12.99

A D Vision score a dynamite hit with this, their debut release. Streets ahead of the limp and flaccid action fare from other anime distributors, *Gunsmith Cats* is a fast-paced fun-fest for any fan of firearms, females, and fast cars (ouch!) For once, here is an anime that really deserves the label of "high octane".

It's a contemporary story set on the streets of Chicago, featuring the adventures of Rally Vincent, gun shop owner and part-time skip tracer, and her diminutive grenade-toting partner May "Minimay" Hopkins. Based on the popular manga comic book (which you can find translated into English from Dark Horse Comics), *Gunsmith Cats* turns up the heat in an action adventure that leaves plenty of its live-action competition in the dust. Part one of the series, The Neutral Zone, is an original story (so comics readers, fret none) that has Rally and May drawn into a sting operation set up by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms. The ATF rope our erstwhile heroines in, only to have the whole thing go pear-shaped on them. There's only one way out and it involves lots of firepower.

As well as the first episode, for your money you also get "the making of" documentary which was released in Japan as "Chapter Zero". This is, frankly, a little tedious at times, after the pace and chase of the actual story. While it's fun to watch, the Japanese creators oohing and aahing on their field trip to Chicago, the trainspotteringly intense coverage of the vintage cars goes on just a tad too long. But that said, *Gunsmith Cats* is cool, from its 70s style opening to its gnarly climax. The dubbing is good, and with some funny key animation on the characters' faces, the cast really get into it. The series has six parts in Japan – more please and be quick about it!

Jim Swallow

7 out of 10

Cert 15

DRAGON HALF

A.D. Vision UK

55 minutes (subtitled) £12.99

There comes a time in the life of every young anime fan when he or she must question the sanity of the Japanese. Watch *Dragon Half* and your conclusion will be

quick and sure. THEY'RE ALL FLIPPIN' BONKERS!

But I digress. What we have here is an RPG parody show (not surprising, since the manga it's derived from first appeared in top Japanese role playing magazine *Dragon*). It's anime comedy taken to the limit and just to make sure you get the gag all the characters regularly jump in and out of super deformed mode. You'll need a quick brain and fast eye to catch all the jokes in this subtitled only release and even then I'd defy you to make sense of the end theme song.

The plot (should your brain be able to take it) has our heroine, Mink, suffering a problem, and it's not just that her dad's a retired knight and her mom's a dragon (*Dragon Half* – geddit!). She's a, not so typical, teenager with an almighty crush on dashing pop star and top pro dragon slayer Dick Saucer. But Mink's troubles are only just beginning. If her only problem was getting that ticket for the Saucer concert in the nearby town, and maybe actually getting to meet her hero, everything would be fine. Alas, in his professional capacity, Dick Saucer has been contracted by the king to get rid of her. Not only that, but the king's daughter (who's got a huge chip on her shoulder about being a half-slime) also wants Mink's head on a plate. To explain any further would be detrimental to my health, but suffice to say it's 'off its head'.

Dragon Half certainly is an acquired taste but one that's definitely worth acquiring.

Wil Overton

8 out of 10

Cert 15

NEWSLINE

1996 was a very good year

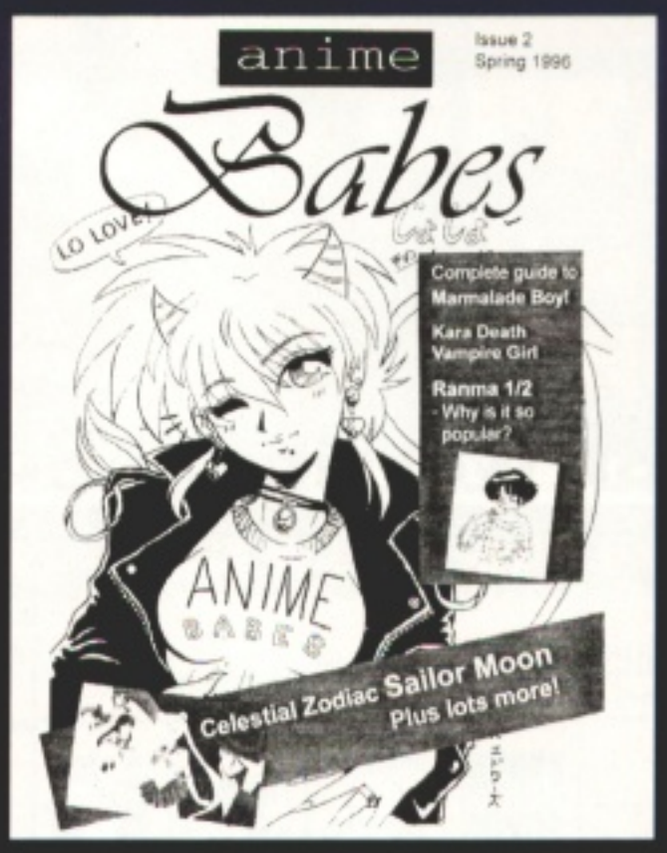
That's what they'll be saying about anime releases if A.D.Vision UK have anything to say about it. Don't believe us? Just look at this line-up for the rest of 1996.

June	Gunsmith Cats 1
	Dragon Half
July	Sukeban Deka 1
	Street Fighter II Pt1
August	Shuten Doji
	Street Fighter II Pt2
September	Burn-up Warrior Pt1
	Street Fighter II Pt3
October	Kaitei Gunkan 1
	Power Dolls
	Street Fighter II Pt4
November	Evangelion Pt1
	Suikoden
	Street Fighter II Pt5
December	Sukeban Deka 2
	Gunsmith Cats 2
	Street Fighter II Pt6

Of special interest to *Super Play* readers is, of course, *Street Fighter*. This is the Japanese TV series *Street Fighter V* (Victory) which ties in with the latest incarnation of the game *SF Alpha* (or *Zero* if you live in Japan).

The girlie show

Ask most folk about the demographics of the average anime buyer in the UK and you'll get the standard reply "what the heck are demographics?". But ask someone who knows about such things and the old chestnut 'boys, 12-17 years old' will come up time after time. But for



the producers of *Anime Babes*, the UK's latest anime and manga fanzine, such statistics just don't wash.

Staffed by an all-girl team of anime fans it's packed full of reviews, articles and even an original manga, all with a refreshing feminine slant. But that's not to say this is a 'ladies only' publication. Editor Lisa Munns is adamant that *Anime Babes* is for everyone and that contributions are welcome from both genders.

Should you desire your own *Anime Babes*, then the princely sum of £1.50 (cheques and P.O.s made out to Lisa Munns) plus two 1st class stamps will secure you an issue. Write to: *Anime Babes*, 4 Trevallyn Road, Launceston, Cornwall PL15 7HN and tell 'em *Super Play* sent you.

"Hand over all the Lupins..."

If there's one director's output any anime distributor would kill to get their hands on, it's got to be Hayao Miyazaki. *Laputa*, *Nausicaä*, *Kiki* and the ubiquitous *Totoro* are all films fans hold dear to their heart, but Miyazaki's insistence on a full theatrical release means that for the time being they're likely to remain the stuff of anime myth. However, you can catch some vintage Miyazaki courtesy of Manga Video this June when they release *The Castle Of Cagliostro*. The high-speed adventures of master thief and stealer of women's hearts – *Lupin III*. Adapted from the long-running Manga by the improbably named Monkey Punch, Cagliostro is a mad mix of James Bond and Inspector Clouseau with counterfeiting, an evil count and the massed hordes of Interpol thrown in for good measure. Out on June 10th, we'll have a full review next month.

VIDEO DIARY

"Lordy lawks, if it ain't a roight royal smorgasboard of those little video fellas leapin' up for the buying of this month Mary Poppins". And for those not fluent in Dick Van Dyke, here's the latest list of what's out and about in the world of UK anime releases. Blimey!

MANGA VIDEO

Titles released in May
Ghost In The Shell
Violence Jack – Part 1
Mad Bull – Part 4
Giant Robo – Part 4
Genocyber Collection

Titles released in June
The Castle Of Cagliostro
Violence Jack – Part 2
Giant Robo – Part 5

PIONEER ANIME

Armitage III – Part 3 (May)

A.D. VISION UK

Gunsmith Cats – Part 1 (June)
Dragon Half (June)

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ISSUE 30
Huge *Mega Man* feature, *Killer Instinct* guide; plus loads of reviews including *International Superstar Soccer...*

ISSUE 31
Free postcards; reviews of *Front Mission, Super Turrican 2, Addams Family Values* and *Dirt Racer SFX.*

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In-depth *Chrono Trigger* feature, a look at the DIY shoot-'em-up kit *Dezaemon*, and the Shigeru Miyamoto interview.

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News on the biggest games of '95. *Killer Instinct, DKC 2, Doom, MK3* and a feature on *Secret of Mana 2.*

ISSUE 34
Exclusive news of *Yoshi's Island*, exclusive *Doom* feature plus *Theme Park* and *Jungle Strike* playguides.

ISSUE 35
Exclusive review of *Vampire's Kiss*, plus *Earthbound* and *Pac-Man 2*, plus part 2 of *Theme Park* and *Jungle Strike* guides.

ISSUE 36
Exclusive! News of *Super Mario RPG* and the first review of *Yoshi's Island.* Plus free *Killer Instinct* poster card!

ISSUE 37
Reviews of *Bomberman 3, Mortal Kombat 3* and *Chrono Trigger*, plus a feature on the craze of retro gaming. Plus Doom playguide part 1 of 4.

ISSUE 38
Exclusive review of *Mechwarrior 3050, Secret Of Mana 2*, and a free A1 *MK/Street Fighter* poster!

ISSUE 39
Includes free 1996 calendar, plus *Secret of Evermore, Earthworm Jim 2* & *Micro Machines 2* reviewed...

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Over 12 rocking pages of Ultra 64 news and previews, Rare feature, the definitive *Diddy's Kong Quest* review and huge What Cart spesh.

ISSUE 41
Red-hot reviews of *Breath of Fire II, Parodius 3* and *Goemon 4*. Plus part one of our massive guide to *Yoshi's Island*.

ISSUE 42
Want to know what's best on the SNES? Look no further than our comprehensive guide.... And! *YI* playguide part 2. Plus! *Mega Man X3* reviewed.

ISSUE 43
Final Fight Tough, Front Mission Gun Hazard and *Killer Instinct 2* coin-op reviewed! All you need to know about game music! Plus heaps more!

ISSUE 44
Loads of delicious new pics of games headed for the N64 plus exclusives: *Mario RPG* and *Star Kirby Deluxe* on SNES!

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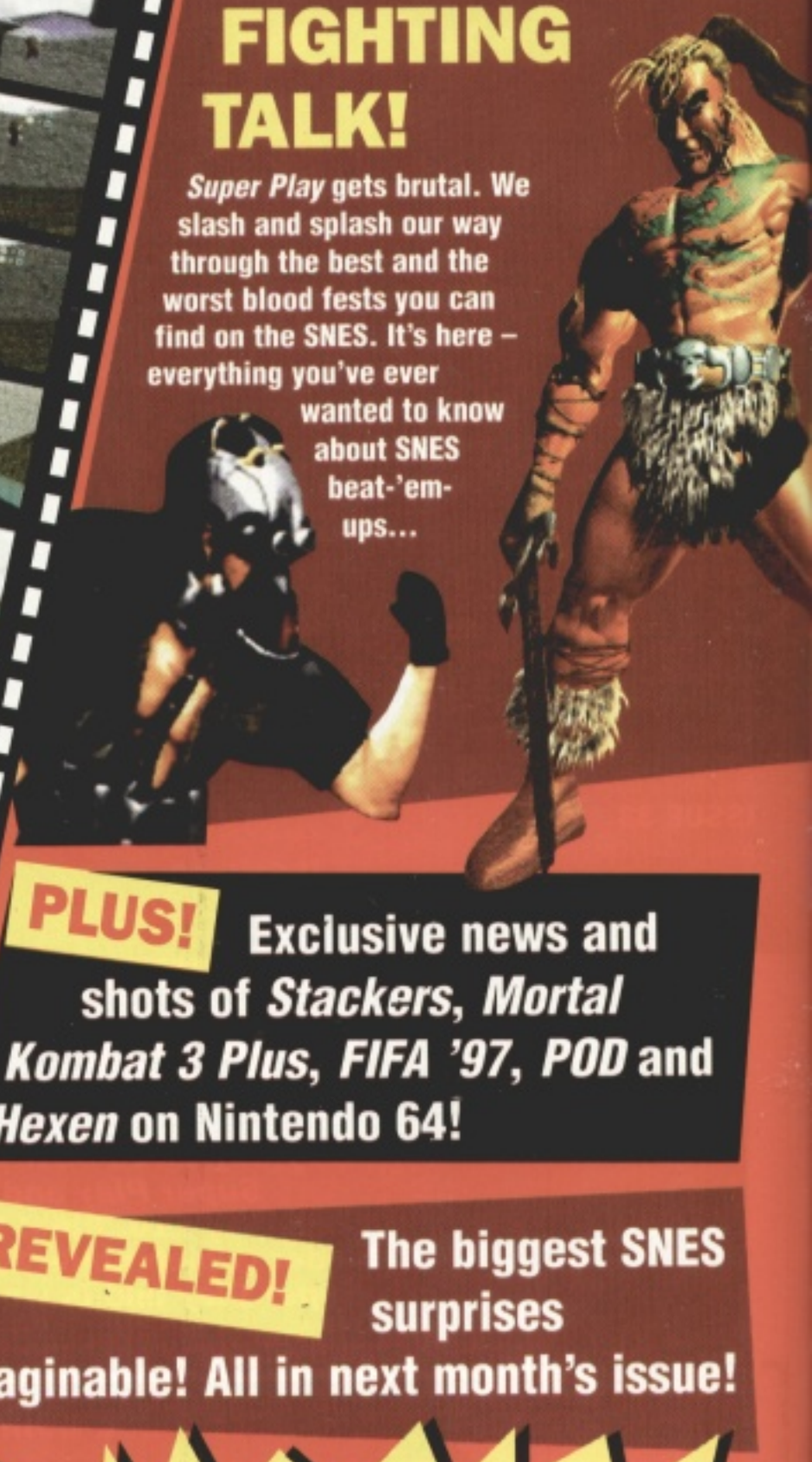
Super Play jet off to the States to – *yes!* – actually have a go on the long-awaited Nintendo 64.

SUPER PLAY

August issue on sale Thursday, 20th June

FIGHTING TALK!

Super Play gets brutal. We slash and splash our way through the best and the worst blood fests you can find on the SNES. It's here – everything you've ever wanted to know about SNES beat-'em-ups...



PLUS! Exclusive news and shots of *Stackers*, *Mortal Kombat 3 Plus*, *FIFA '97*, *POD* and *Hexen* on Nintendo 64!

REVEALED! The biggest SNES surprises imaginable! All in next month's issue!

ISSUE 45

JULY 1996

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